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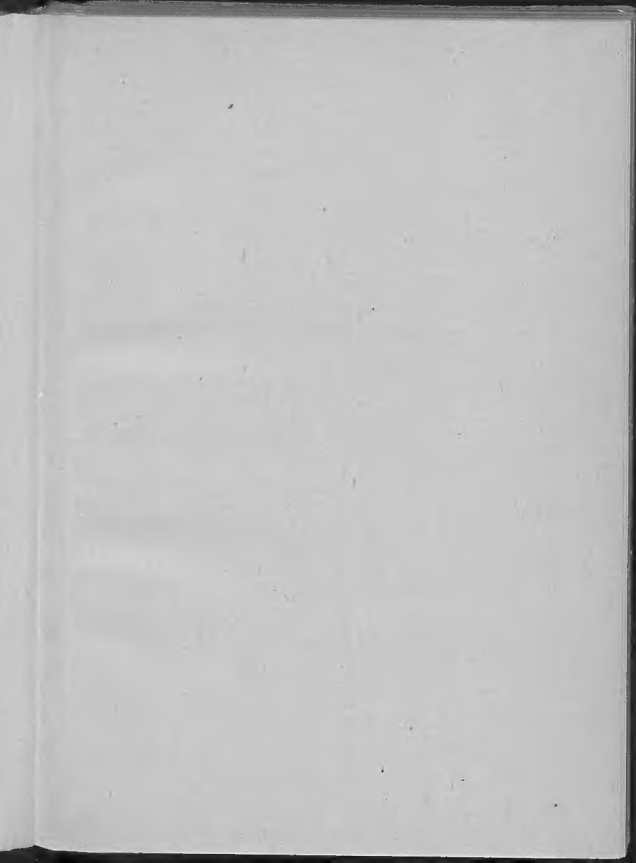
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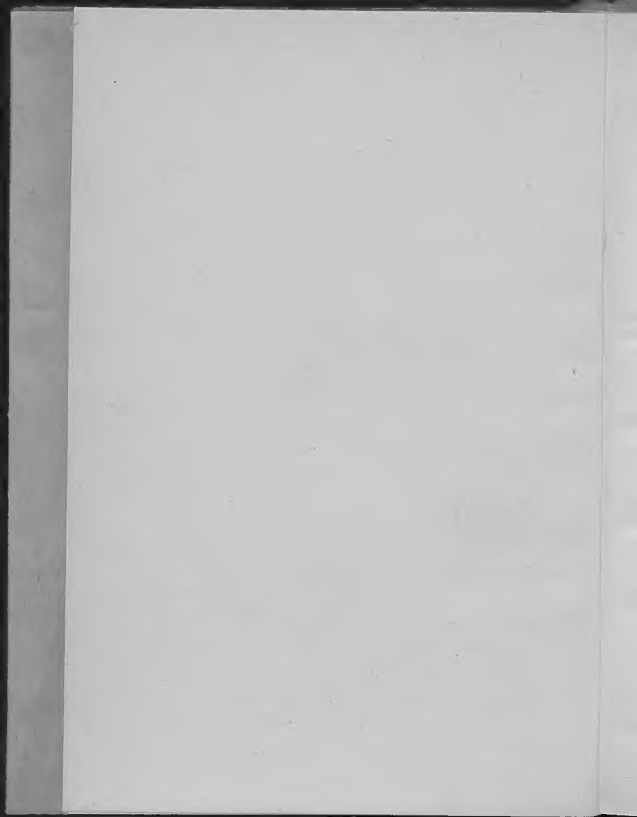
**MADRAS ALLAHABAD CALCUTTA RANGOON COLOMBO
1919**

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The Islam Series

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AL-GHAYALI

AL-GHAZALI

BY THE
REV. W. R. W. GARDNER, M.A.

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FIRST EDITION

THE CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY
FOR INDIA

MADRAS ALLAHABAD CALCUTTA RANGOON COLOMBO

1919

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. BIOGRAPHY	1
II. HIS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES ...	30
III. AL-GHAZALI'S THEOLOGICAL POSITION.	47
IV. AL-GHAZALI AS SUFI	64
V. AL-GHAZALI AS THINKER AND Ex- POSITOR	86
APPENDIX	105



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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

MUHAMMAD bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad Et-Ṭúsí, better known to later generations as Abú Hámíd Al-Ghazálí was born in the year A.H. 450 (A.D. 1058) in one of the townships of the district of Ṭús in the province of Khurásán in Persia.¹

¹ The province of Khurásán contained several districts; the principal of these were Juwayn, Quhastán, Baghshúr, Marw, Ṭús, Bayhaq, Baharz, Naysabúr (Nishapúr) was the capital of the province. (*Subh al-A'sha*, vol. iv, p. 389 f., Government Press, Cairo, 1914.) That Ṭús was a district is clear not only from the above, but from the use of the word *kywar* (districts) used by the author of the *Qāmín*, quoted by Al-Qalqashandí (id. p. 390, last line of the page) as well as from the statement of Yaqút, who calls it a province (*wiláya*). (Yaqút, vol. xiii, p. 327). That there was also a town of the name of Ṭús is, of course, true. In another passage, Yaqút quotes Al-Biládhuri (d. A.H. 279) as saying, Khurásán is four quarters. The first is Irán Shahr, which includes Naysabúr, and Quhastán, and At-Tabasán, and Herát, and Bushanj, and Badghis, and Ṭús (and its name is Tábarán). (Yaqút, vol. iv, p. 408.) The district of Ṭús contained four towns, Radkán, Tábarán, Bazdghur, and Nawqán, (Yaqút gives the spelling as Núqán) and more than 1,000 villages. (See Yaqút, quoting Mis'ar bin Mukhalhil, vol. vi, p. 7. Ibn Khallikán, vol. i, p. 29. Jackson, *From Constantinople to the Home of Omár Khayyam*, p. 267, 284 ff.) Of these four towns, Tábarán was the capital, while Nawqán was the most populous. It was outside of

According to a statement attributed to a grandson of Abu Hámid, Al-Ghazáli was not born in the town of Tús (Tábarán) itself, but in one of the villages of this district, called Ghazála.¹ It is commonly believed, however, that he was born at Tús (Tábarán).

As far as we know, the elder Al-Ghazáli had only two sons, Muḥammad, of whom we write, and Aḥmad, who was Muḥammad's junior. He also had daughters; but we know neither their names nor their number.² Of Al-Ghazáli's mother we know nothing beyond the fact that she survived her husband and lived to see both of her sons famous at Baghdad, whither apparently she accompanied or followed them. An interesting story is

Nawqán that 'Alí bin Músá ar-Riḍá and Haroun Ar-Rashid were buried. Thus, the present Meshed represents the old Nawqán, and must cover some at least of the site of that city; while the ruins now known as Tús represent the old city of Tábarán, which, having been the capital of the district, was commonly called by the name of the district. It was outside Tábarán that Al-Ghazáli and Firdausi were buried. It is a mistake to regard Tús as having been a metropolis containing four boroughs. That there ever existed a city of Tús stretching thirty-five miles, from Meshed to Radkán, is incredible. As-Sam'áni, in the *Kitābu'l-Ansáb*, says that Tús contained two towns and over one thousand villages. When he speaks of visiting the place he uses the expression 'Núqán Tús' (there was another Núqán near Naysabūr; see Yaqút, under title Núqán). The interesting point is that apparently he did not know of a city of Tús.

¹ Sayyid Murtaḳá, p. 18.

² Aḥmad, the younger brother, also became famous, and, when his brother left Baghdad in A.H. 488, succeeded him in the Nazāmiya school; but he inclined rather to preaching, in which he excelled. He travelled much, and like his elder brother, served Šūfiism, and finally died at Qazwín in A.H. 520.

told of how when Abú Hámid was at the height of his fame at Baghdad, his brother Ahmad not merely failed to show him proper respect, but acted in such a manner as to discredit him in the eyes of the people. The full account is worth quoting. He had a brother called Ahmad, surnamed Jamál ed-Dín,¹ who, notwithstanding the high rank which his brother held, would not take part with him in the prayers (i.e. would not recognize him as a man fitted to lead in the public prayers) even while thousands of the commonality and the nobility ranged themselves in ranks behind him. So he complained to his mother of what he experienced at the hands of his brother (saying), that it almost led the people to doubt him, seeing that his brother was celebrated for his good conduct and piety: and he asked his mother to order him (Ahmad) to treat him as other people did. He complained about this repeatedly and pressed his demand. His mother urged him (Ahmad) time and again to agree to this, and he agreed on condition that he stand apart from the ranks. The Imám accepted this condition: and when one of the appointed times of prayer arrived, the Imám went to the mosque and the people followed him, till, when the Imám began the prayer, and the people began it after him, Jamál ed-Dín followed him in the prayer at a distance. And while they were praying, Jamál ed-Dín suddenly interrupted him. So this trial was worse than the first. And when he was asked the reason of his conduct he

¹ Or as others say Zayn ed-Dín, *Tabaqát*, vol. ii, p. 55.

replied that it was impossible for him to take as his pattern an Imám whose heart was full of blood, indicating by this expression the vileness of one who took a share in the work of worldly men of learning.¹

I think we may infer from this story that Abú Ḥamid was his mother's favourite.

The two brothers, while still young, lost their father. The latter was a poor but devout man, who supported his family by the spinning of wool. He had never been able to learn to write, and we may conclude that neither could he read. Nevertheless he associated with theologians and attended their meetings for discourse and discussion. When nearing his end, he confided his two young boys to the care of a friend, a devout Šúfí, whose name, unfortunately, has not come down to us, enjoining on him to spend the little fortune he left in educating them that they might be able to attain a position such as he himself had desired but had failed to reach.

This friend faithfully carried out the father's wishes, and started the boys in that course of study which led them both in after years to honour, and which, in the case of Abú Ḥamid, made him one of the leading figures in the whole history of muslim theology.

How old Al-Ghazálí was when his father died, we do not know; but from the terms which the biographers employ, we may fairly deduce that he was still quite young; for it was from their Šúfí guardian himself that the two boys learned to write.

¹ Mishkát al-Añwár, Matba'as-Sidq, Cairo 1322, p. 61.

The guardian, however, was a poor man, and the time came when the small inheritance left by their father was spent. The interval between their father's death and the exhaustion of their inheritance was apparently sufficiently long to have made it possible for the boys to progress considerably in their studies. Having, then, no means of support, on the advice of their guardian they sought and found admittance to one of the Madrasas in Tūs.¹ The incident is thus told by As-Subkí.² 'And when he (the father) died, the Sūfī began to teach them till the small means which he had left them was exhausted, and the Sūfī was unable to continue to support them. So he said to them, "Know that I have spent upon you what was (left) to you, and I am myself a man who has kept himself from the affairs of this world, so that I have no fortune of which I can give you a share. And, as far as I can see, the best thing you can do is to find shelter in some school; for you are seekers of knowledge (theological students), and you will get food on which you can depend during your lives." So they did this.'

The two lads, then, having enrolled in one of the schools of Tūs, studied under Sheikh 'Alī Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Ar-Radhakání.³ Under this Sheikh, Abū Hāmid continued his studies for some time. While we

¹ From As-Subkí we learn that Madrasas existed before the days of Nizām al-Mulk. He adds, however, that he is strongly of the opinion that the latter was the first to establish appointments for the support of the students. *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. iii, p. 137.

² *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. iii, p. 102.

³ As Subkí thus spells the name. *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. iii, p. 136.

have no means of reckoning exactly the time thus spent, we know that some years must have passed, and apparently his love of knowledge began to manifest itself even at this early period of his life.

We next find him at Jurján¹ whither he went to continue his course of study under Abú Naṣr Al-Ismá'ílí. It must have been no light undertaking for the youthful scholar to travel from Ṭūs to Jurján, a journey of ten or eleven days through unsettled country; and it throws light on the independence of his character and on his ambition that he made the venture. Yet, he was but following the example of many of his contemporaries: for Ṭūs, in these early days, was noted as the birthplace of many who wandered far in search of learning, and rose to honour and fame. Why Al-Ghazálí went so far from home, when Naysabúr was only two or three days' journey distant, we can only conjecture. It may be that he already was feeling the irksomeness of the fetters of taqlíd,² and desired to get away from Khurásán to see whether such methods of teaching were general.

Of the lectures of Abú Naṣr he took copious notes, but failed to assimilate what he heard, and make it his own. With these precious notes he set out on his homeward journey to his native town of Ṭūs: and on the way he

¹ Jurjan was the chief town of Mazadarán, a district lying north-west of Khurásán, and between Tabaristán and Khuwarizm. *Subh al-A'sha*, vol. iv, p. 387.

² By taqlid is meant the acceptance of dogma, method of argument, or practice, on the mere ground of human authority without any proof of its truth or reasonableness.

had an adventure from which he was to learn a lesson of as great value to him as all his previous studies. Somewhere on the journey he was set upon by robbers who took everything he had. Let us hear his own account of the incident. It is given on the authority of Imám As'ad Al-Mayhaní and of Nizám Al-Mulk. "We were set upon on the way, and the robbers took everything I had and went off. But I followed them, and the chief turned to me and said, "Turn back, or you will perish." But I said, "I beg you by Him from whom you hope for salvation, that you give me back only my notes, for they will do you no good." He said, "What are your notes?" I replied, "The books in that bag. I left my country to hear them, and write them, and learn their knowledge." Thereupon, he laughed and said, "How can you pretend to have learned their knowledge, when I have taken them and stripped you of your learning so that you have no knowledge?" Then he gave orders to one of his companions, and he handed over the bag to me.¹ The robber chief was evidently as ready with his tongue as with his sword.

The lesson which Al-Ghazálí learned through this experience was one he never forgot. In the *Munqidh*, we have his own statement that when he studied, later, the theories of the philosophers, the methods of the Mutakallimín, or the ways of the Šúfis, he pondered over them, and was not satisfied till he had gained a thorough grasp of them all.

¹ *Ṭabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 103.

On returning to Tús, he commenced at once committing to memory the notes which he had written at Jurján, realizing that till he had assimilated the teaching and made it his very own, he could not be said to know it. This occupied him, as he tells us, three years. Whether he spent more than these three years at Tús, at this time, we do not know; but it was probably during this stay in his native town that he studied Šúfiism under the guidance of Yusuf An-Nassáj.

We see him next at Naysabúr, attending the lectures of the famous Imám Al-Ĥaramayn¹ as well as those of the celebrated Šúfi teacher Al-Faramdhí.² He was soon recognized as a brilliant scholar, and along with Al-Kiyá' and Aĥmad Al-Khawáfí was a favourite pupil of the Imám. It is related that the latter in describing and comparing the three said, 'Al-Ghazálí is a sea to drown in,³ Al-Kiyá' is a tearing lion, and Al-Khawáfí is a burning fire.'⁴ Another reported saying of the Imám

¹ For a long account of Al-Ĥaramayn, see *Tabaqát*, vol. iii, pp. 249-280.

² As-Subkí says, on the authority of As-Sam'ani, that the name was spelled thus, though he also mentions the other form Al-Faramadhí. *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 9, 10.

³ As-Subkí reads *Mughdiq*, inexhaustible, instead of *Mughriq*. *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 103. See also vol. iv, p. 106, and the expression *bahr la yunzaf* in vol. iv, p. 104.

⁴ Ibn Khallikán says of Al-Kiyá', that he was loud voiced, an eloquent speaker, that in his discourses he was great on tradition, and is reported to have said, 'If the horsemen of tradition enter the battle-fields, the heads of analogy fly in the wind'. Of Al-Khawáfí, he says that he was a famous disputant, noted for his power of silencing his opponent.

Al-Haramayn about these three is, 'When they contend together, the examination and proof (at-tahqíq) belongs to Al-Khawafi, the hypotheses and conjectures (al-hadsíyyát)¹ belongs to Al-Ghazálí, and the clear exposition (al-bayán) belongs to Al-Kiyá'.²

Yet while the Imám had a very high opinion of the abilities of Al-Ghazálí and outwardly spoke of him with praise, it is said that at heart he was somewhat jealous of him. There is no need to think that it was Al-Ghazálí's wide and extensive learning which caused the Imám to feel this touch of jealousy towards his brilliant pupil; rather, I think, must we look for the explanation of the Imám's feelings to Al-Ghazálí's independence of thought and his contempt for all 'authorities', together with his absolute self-reliance, and the disdain which he was wont to show for those who could not at times see the force of his arguments.³

As we have already seen, we have no clear data from which we can determine the exact year in which Al-Ghazálí went to Naysabúr; so we do not know how many years he spent there. What we do know is that while he resided at Naysabúr, he studied, he taught, he wrote, and he disputed, making for himself a place among the learned men of his day.

In the year A.H. 478, Imám Al-Haramayn died. After his death, Al-Ghazálí quitted Naysabúr, and

¹ This is the reading of As-Subkí, instead of Sayyid Murtadá's *harbiyyát*, warlike attacks.

² *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 106.

³ See *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, pp. 107 and 108.

betook himself to the camp of the Sultán Malik Sháh, where Nizám Al-Mulk, the famous organiser of educational institutions and patron of learning was to be found. From him he might expect assistance, seeing that the famous minister was himself a native of Tús, and might therefore be expected to be ready to do what he could for a compatriot of such great abilities.

From Ibn Al-Athír, we know that the Sultán Malik Sháh, returning from his conquests, entered Baghdad for the first time in A.H. 479, and remained there till 480, when he went to Ispahán. In A.H. 482, he went to Khurásán, where he gathered an army for the conquest of Samarqand. He conquered and settled the country, and returned to Khurásán; but in the very same year he was obliged to turn his steps again to Samarqand, for a revolt had already broken out. After this second expedition, he again returned to Khurásán. In A.H. 483 the Imám Abú Abdallah Aṭ-Ṭabarí arrived at Baghdad with an official letter from Nizám Al-Mulk, having been appointed by the latter a teacher in the Nizámiyya Madrasa there; and a few months later, he was followed by Abú Muḥammad Abd Al-Wahháb Ash-Shirází with a similar letter of appointment. In Ramadán A.H. 484, the Sultán Malik Sháh returned to Baghdad, not having visited the city since 480; and it was in the same year (484) that Al-Ghazálí came to the Nizámiyya Madrasa at the invitation of Nizám Al-Mulk. It is natural to suppose that he accompanied the minister or followed him after a very brief interval.

It would appear, then, that Al-Ghazálí's visit to the camp of Nizám Al-Mulk took place sometime between the beginning of A.H. 482 and Ramaḍán 484, and the year 482 or the year 483 we may, therefore, safely put down as the time when he left Naysabúr and sought the favour of his fellow-countryman.

It is interesting to note in passing, that Nizám Al-Mulk himself, in his earlier years, studied law (*fiqh*) and tradition at Tús, and apparently he never lost his interest in theological discussion and controversy. Even his camp in *Khurásán*, where he was gathering the army for the conquest of Samatqand, was the rendezvous of theologians and the scene of their disputations.

Al-Ghazálí did not long enjoy the pátronage of this enlightened administrator: for in the following year A.H. (485) Nizám Al-Mulk had again to go eastwards, accompanying the Sultán to Ispahán. While they were returning to Baghdad, and were near Nahawand, the great minister was treacherously assassinated by a Bâtíní youth on the tenth of Muḥarram of the same year. It is reported that the assassination was committed at the instigation of the Sultán himself, as he was jealous of his minister's power and influence.

Abú Hámid remained in Baghdad till A.H. 488, lecturing, writing, giving out fetwas (decisions on points of jurisprudence or theology). His lectures in the Madrasa drew large numbers of students: he himself tells us that they were attended by 300 students. At the same time he was privately studying philosophy, and reconsidering his own position and his manner of life.

In Dhú'l-Qa'da ' A.H. 488, he left Baghdad and went to Syria.²

It is difficult to determine the chronology of the 'retirement' of Al-Ghazálí during the next eleven years of his life.

Let us first hear the stories on which we must depend for our knowledge of how these years were spent, and see whether it is possible to reconcile them with one another and form a fairly definite opinion as to Al-Ghazálí's movements and manner of life during this most important period of his career.

The following summary of Al-Ghazálí's own statement in the *Munqidh*, we take from Professor MacDonald's article on Al-Ghazálí in the Journal of the American Oriental Society.³ 'He betook himself to Syria, and remained there almost two years, living in strict retirement and giving all his time to the religious exercises of the Şúfis with prayer and meditation.⁴ While at Damascus he used to go up to the minaret of the mosque, shut the door upon himself, and there pass his days. From Damascus he went to Jerusalem and shut himself up similarly in the Dome of the Rock. Now he began to feel himself drawn to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. It had been under pretence of a pilgrimage that

¹ As-Subkí says Dhú'l-Hijja. *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 104.

² For the circumstances which led to this flight, see Chapter viii.

³ Vol. xx, pp. 92, 93.

⁴ The comma after the word *years* should be omitted. Al-Ghazálí does not mean to say that he spent only about two years in Syria, but that he spent about two years in Syria in complete retirement.

he had stolen away from Baghdad and fled to Damascus ; but apparently at that time he could not bring himself to such a step. Whether he felt himself too unclean, or his religious faith was too uncertain, might be hard to settle ; at any rate it was only now, after long meditation and discipline, that he at length performed the culminating act of the religious life of a Muslim. From Jerusalem he went to Hebron to visit the grave of Abraham, Al-Khalil, the Friend of God, and thence to the Hijáz and Mecca and Madína. . . . In spite of his former resolution to retire from the world, he was drawn back. The prayers of his children and his own aspirations broke in upon him, and though he resolved again and again to return to the contemplative life, and did actually do so, yet events, family affairs, and the anxieties of life, kept continually disturbing him. This went on, he tells us, for almost ten years, and in that time there were revealed to him things that could not be reckoned and the discussion of which could not be exhausted.'

To this must be added what we learn from another part of the *Munqidh*. Here¹ he tells us that after spending about ten years in retirement he began to consider the conditions prevailing around him. The view he gives us of Muslim society shows that there was enough to sadden his heart. He found that faith was weak and lukewarm ; that the practices of religion, as commanded in the Qur'án, were neglected ; and that this neglect

¹ *Munqidh*, p. 37 ff.

was very general. People pointed to famous learned men who paid no attention to the precepts of the religion which they professed, and they claimed that, if the practices of religion were binding, these men would be the first to fulfil them. The example of the learned afforded an excuse to the common people to neglect religion. Some of these learned men never prayed, others drank wine, others robbed the religious endowments of which they had charge, or in other ways lived evil lives. Bribery of both judges and witnesses was common. Even among the *Şúfis*, religious practices were neglected on the plea that a stage had been attained in which these were unnecessary. When Al-Ghazálí saw all this, and believed that he knew the cure for it, he felt, so he tells us, that he ought to leave his retirement and come out again into the world, and take up the work of a reformer. But the more he considered the matter, the surer he felt that all his efforts in this direction would be in vain unless he had the support of a truly religious ruler, and one who would *use force* when necessary. At this very time, when he was pondering over things, God, he says, stirred up the ruler of the time to take action. Without naming him¹ he tells us how he summoned him to Naysabúr². Fakhr Al-Mulk, the then vizier, approached him.

¹ It must have been Mustadhbir. See Macdonald's article 'Al-Ghazali' in the *Encyclopædia of Islám*.

² Abd Al-Gháfir, quoted by As-Subkí, tells us that it was actually Fakhr Al-Mulk who summoned him after having made enquiries about him. *Ṭabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 108.

and not merely asked but importuned him to come out of his retirement and undertake the work of teaching at Naysabúr. At first, notwithstanding his own personal inclinations, he hesitated, but finally, after consultation with a body of Šúfis who advised him to accept the invitation to teach at the Nizámíyya Madrasa, he acquiesced and went. It was, he says, in Dhú'l-Qa'da A.H. 499 that he left Tús and went to Naysabúr. And he adds that as he left Baghdad in Dhú'l-Qa'da A.H. 488, his retirement lasted exactly eleven years.

So much for Al-Ghazálí's own account of these years. It is, however, far from being complete. For instance, we know from the *Munqidh*¹ that he resided in, or at least visited, Hamadán : for he mentions that one of his books was written in answer to a question which was put to him in Hamadán.

Let us look next at what Ibn Al-Athír, the historian, says. We take him here because his statement is brief and in a general way accords closely with Al-Ghazálí's own outline of this period of his life.

He says : ' In this year (A.H. 488) the Imám Abú Hámíd Al-Ghazálí went to Syria and visited Jerusalem, and left off teaching at the Nizámíyya, and left his brother to take his place, and gave himself to devotion, and wore coarse clothing, and ate poor food. And in this journey he composed the *Ihyá' 'Ulúmi'd-Dín*, and many people heard it from him in Damascus, and he returned

¹ p. 26.

² Vol. x, p. 104.

to Baghdad after performing the pilgrimage in the following year (489), and went to Khurásán.¹

For what remains we must turn to As-Subkí

'He left all that' (fame, glory, advancement, etc.), says As-Subkí, 'behind his back and set out for the Sacred House of God'² and set out on the pilgrimage³ in Dhú'l-Hijja⁴ A.H. 488, leaving his brother to teach in his place; and he entered Damascus in 489, and spent a short time in it as a devotee. Then he went to Jerusalem and sojourned in it some time, then he returned to Damascus and sought seclusion in the western minaret of the mosque, residing in it, as Adh-Dhahabí mentions, quoting from Ibn Al-'Asákir, though I have not found it

¹ It is to be noted that though it is usually supposed that Ibn Al-Athír states that Al-Ghazálí returned to Baghdad in A.H. 489 what he actually says is that he performed the pilgrimage in 489 and then returned to Baghdad, without saying how long after his pilgrimage this was. The phrase 'in the following year' dates the pilgrimage, but does not necessarily date the return to Baghdad.

² We take As-Subkí in preference to the Sayyid Murtadá, as our authority, because in the part of the latter's article dealing with this period of Al-Ghazálí's life, the Sayyid is almost wholly dependent on As-Subkí whom he quotes profusely, and often in such a way as to lead one to take certain comments as his own, which are simply quotations from As-Subkí. For instance, on page 4 we read, 'And I have not found it in his writings.' Professor Macdonald (p. 99) naturally takes this as a remark of the Sayyid Murtadá, but it is really a part of the quotation from As-Subkí.

³ Wa qasada bayta 'Iláhi'l-harama. Abd Al-Gháfír wrote, 'wa qasada bayta 'Iláhi wa hajja.' *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 107

⁴ Wa kharaja fí'l-hajji.

⁵ So this edition reads; but Sayyid Murtadá, quoting him, reads, 'Dhú'l-Qa'da,' and this is correct according to Al-Ghazálí himself in the *Munqidh*.

in his writings. And Al-Ghazālī used to sit a great deal in the corner (záwiya) of Sheikh Naṣr Al-Maqdisī, in the Umawī Jámí' which is known to-day on this account as the Ghazālī záwiya.¹ It was known before this as the záwiya of Sheikh Naṣr Al-Maqdisī. Ibn Al-'Asákir says that Al-Ghazālī stayed in Syria nearly ten years, so quotes Adh-Dhahabí, but I have not found it in the writings of Ibn Al-'Asákir, neither in his history of Damascus, nor in the Tabyín.² And many stories are told of him ; for example, that he wished to meet Sheikh Naṣr, but entered Damascus only on the day of his death. By chance he entered the Jámí', wearing the garments of a faqír, and happened to sit down in the záwiya referred to ; and after a little, a number of students came and took part with him in theological conversation³ after they had observed him carefully, and taken a good look at him ; and they found him an inexhaustible sea. He said to them, What has happened to Sheikh Naṣr Al-Maqdisí ? They said, He has died, and we have just come back from his burial ; and when he was about to die, we asked him, Who will succeed you in your circle ? He replied, " When you have finished burying me, return to the záwiya, and you will find a Sheikh, a Persian (and he described you to us). Salute him in my name, he

¹ For a biography of Al-Maqdisí, see *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 27.

² As-Subkí later makes a verbatim quotation from 'Abd Al-Gháfír as to the length of time spent by Al-Ghazālī in his wanderings. The quotation is, ' Then he entered Syria and stayed in these countries ten years, wandering round and visiting the great shrines ' *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 107.

³ Wa shárákúhu fí'l-'ulúmi.

will be my successor." And I (Al-Subkí) regard the story as unauthentic ; the death of Sheikh Naşr took place in A.H. 490 ; and if it be true, the incident probably occurred on his (Al-Ghazálí's) return to Damascus from Jerusalem. And if it be not true, it is possible that he met him when he entered Damascus in 489, a year before the death of Naşr. Adh-Dhahabí states plainly that Al-Ghazálí sat with (jálasa) Naşr. But I (As-Subkí) say that the person whom Naşr Al-Maqdisí named as his successor was Nasrallah Al-Masisi, one of his pupils.¹

' Another story,' says As-Subkí, ' is that when he entered it (Damascus) wearing the garments of a faqír, he sat down at the door of the Samisiyya Khanqah, until an unknown faqír admitted him. And he began to sweep the ablution tanks belonging to the Khanqah, and to act as a servant in it. And it happened that one day he sat down in the court of the Umawí Jámí', and a number of muftis were walking back and fore in the court ; and suddenly a countryman came to them and asked them to give him a fetwa ; and they did not answer him. Al-Ghazálí was looking on, and when he saw that no one had an answer for him, feeling it hard that he should be without guidance, he called him and gave him an answer. The villager began to mock him and say, " If the muftis could not answer me, how can this common faqír give me an answer ? " The muftis were looking on, and when he finished talking with him, they called the villager and asked him, " What did this

¹ *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 104.

common man say to you ? ” So he explained the matter to them ; and they came to him (Al-Ghazālī) and became acquainted with him, and stood around him, and asked him to appoint a sitting (majlis) with them, and he promised (to meet) them the next day ; but he set off (left the city) that very night.¹

‘ Another story ’, to quote again from As-Subkī, ‘ is that he happened to go one day into the Amīna Madrasa and found the teacher, as he was teaching, saying, “ Al-Ghazālī says ”. And Al-Ghazālī was afraid that he might become self-conceited, so he left Damascus² and began to wander from town to town ; and he went to Cairo (Misr), and from there to Alexandria, and stayed in it some time. And it is said that he intended to go to the Sulṭān Yūsuf bin Tashfīn, the Sulṭān of the West, because of what he had heard of his justice. But he heard of his death³ and continued to wander through the countries, and visit the shrines, and go round the cemeteries and mosques, and take refuge in the deserts, and exercised himself in devotional exercises. . . . Then he returned to Baghdad and held a majlis in which he preached and spoke about the Ṣūfīs (ahlu’l-haqqa), and lectured on the Iḥyá’. . . . And ‘ Abd Al-Ghāfir says that

¹ *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. iv, p. 104.

² Professor Macdonald says (p. 98) ‘ This story cannot be true as it stands, for that Madrasa was not founded till 514.’

³ Professor Macdonald says (p. 100) of this story : ‘ That Al-Ghazālī should have been prevented from setting out for Yūsuf b. Tashfīn in 500 by the report of the death of the latter is impossible, as we have seen that he was summoned to teach at Naysabūr by Fakhr Al-Mulk, who was assassinated in the first month of 500.

Al-Ghazálí then returned to Khurásán, and taught in the Nizámíyya Madrasa at Naysabúr for a short time, while his whole heart was attached to what had been opened up to him of the way. Then he returned to the city of Tūs, and chose beside his house a Madrasa for students of law (fuqahá), and a Khanqah for the Šúfis, and spent his time in various duties.¹

It is unnecessary to follow As-Subkí any further for the present. We have seen enough for our purpose, which is to gather as many details as possible from the various writers and, if possible, weave them into a connected narrative. We must note, however, that As-Subkí depends very largely on 'Abd Al-Gháfir, who was a contemporary of Al-Ghazálí and a personal acquaintance of his. He was born in A.H. 451, being thus only one year younger than Abú Hámid, and he studied also under Imám Al-Haramayn at Naysabúr, where he had every opportunity of knowing Al-Ghazálí well. He met Al-Ghazálí on the return of the latter to Khurásán, and frequently visited him. It is possible that he was the 'brother in the faith' to whom the *Munqidh* is addressed; for he says, 'then we asked him how it was that he desired to leave his house and return to what he had been called upon to undertake in the matter of Naysabúr.'² 'Abd Al-Gháfir died in A.H. 529.

We have already noted that Al-Ghazálí's own statement in the *Munqidh* makes no pretence of being a complete account of the years which were spent in Syria and

¹ *Tabaqat*, vol. iv, p. 105

² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

elsewhere after leaving Baghdad : and that the period of 'almost two years' of which he speaks cannot be taken as limiting the length of the time during which he resided or wandered in Syria and elsewhere.

We cannot doubt the story that he taught in Damascus, and it is most probable that he taught the *Ihyá'* there. 'Abd Al-Gháfir tells us that it was written during these years, and Ibn Al-Athír states that many heard it from him at Damascus. Further, it is difficult to explain the fact mentioned by 'Abd Al-Gháfir, that the *záwiya* formerly known as the *záwiya* of Sheikh Naṣr, was afterwards known as the *záwiya* of Al-Ghazálí, except on the supposition that he taught there. The stories of Al-Ghazálí's connexion with Damascus can have arisen only on a basis of historical fact, though some of them, in themselves, are more than suspicious.

Now, if he taught in Damascus, it cannot have been during the first two years after leaving Baghdad ; for he himself tells us that these two years were spent in 'strict retirement, and giving all his time to the religious exercises of the *Šúfis* with prayer and contemplation.' We must, therefore, conclude that he did spend more than two years in Syria and the neighbouring lands. That this conclusion does not really clash with the account of Ibn Al-Athír, we have already seen ; for the latter does not say how long Al-Ghazálí was absent from Baghdad after he performed the pilgrimage in the year 489. How Al-Ghazálí spent the years between 489 and the year of his return to Baghdad, does not concern Ibn Al-Athír, and he therefore passes them over in silence.

From 'Abd Al-Gháfir, who was, as we have seen, a contemporary and a personal friend of Al-Ghazálí, we hear that Abú Hámid spent *about ten years* in Syria and neighbouring lands, and 'Abd Al-Gháfir had every opportunity of knowing the truth: for he says that he visited Al-Ghazálí *frequently* after his return to Naysabúr.

Were it possible to consult the *Ansáb* of Ibn As-Sam'ání (d. 562), we might find further light, but it is doubtful whether he could tell us much more than does 'Abd Al-Gháfir, and as As-Subkí adds to his own biography of Abú Hámid what he says is a verbatim and complete extract of what 'Abd Al-Gháfir wrote about Al-Ghazálí. Seeing, then, that he states that Al-Ghazálí spent about ten years in Syria and the neighbouring lands, and seeing, further, that this statement does not really clash with what Al-Ghazálí himself has written, nor with what Ibn Al-Athír says, we may take it as true.

We conclude, then, that Al-Ghazálí arrived at Damascus from Baghdad in A.H. 489, as As-Subkí states to have been the case. Here he may have met Sheikh Naşr Al-Maqdisi, as As-Subkí further suggests, for he tells us that Adh-Dhahabi clearly states that Al-Ghazálí *sat with* Naşr. The story of his entering Damascus on the day on which Sheikh Naşr died is to be rejected unless it be ascribed to the time of Al-Ghazálí's return to Damascus from Jerusalem. If Al-Ghazálí indeed sat with Naşr, he must have done so during the time that he was still leading the life of

BIOGRAPHY

a dervish, retired from public teaching and controversy.¹

In Syria, Al-Ghazālī spent about two years as a faqīr, during which time falls his residence in Damascus and retirement to the minaret of the Umawī Jāmi'; his visit to Jerusalem, where he used to retire to the Dome of the Rock; his visit to Hebron, and his pilgrimage to the holy cities in the Hijāz; as well as a further period of retired life, spent we know not with certainty where, but we may suppose that it was at Damascus. That he returned to Syria from the Hijāz may be taken as certain; for none of the accounts of his life suggest that he wandered across Arabia to Baghdad.²

¹ It was probably at this period of his life that he read what he calls 'the Injil of Jesus'. In the *Risālatu Ayyuhā'l Walad* (vol. i of the collection, p. 102) he says, 'I saw in the Injil of Jesus (on whom be peace) that he said that from the time that the dead body is placed on the bier to the time it is placed on the edge of the grave, God Himself asks him forty questions.' It is very evident that what he had read was some apocryphical gospel, if it was a 'gospel' at all; and one cannot but lose oneself in conjecture as to what might have happened if Al-Ghazālī had come across one of the canonical gospels, for he was at this time above all things seeking light.

² The return to Syria after the pilgrimage and his continued residence there, may be the explanation of the statement of 'Abd Al-Ghāfir, that he set out from Baghdad, went on pilgrimage, and then went to Syria (fa kharaja 'amma kana fīhi wa qaṣada bayta 'Ilāhi wa ḥajja thumma dakhala 'sh-shāma wa aqawa fi tilka 'd-diyāri qarīban min 'ashara sanīna (*Ṭabaqāt*, vol. iv, p. 107). 'Abd Al-Ghāfir apparently passes by in silence the time spent between Al-Ghazālī's leaving Baghdad and his going on pilgrimage. Al-Ghazālī cannot have performed the pilgrimage in 488, for he was too late in leaving Baghdad to arrive in time at Mekka, and Ibn Al-Aṭhīr dates the pilgrimage distinctly in A.H. 489.

Having continued his life of retirement and meditation, on his return from the pilgrimage, for some months longer, probably till about Sha'bán or Ramaḍán A.H. 490, he came back to semi-public life, and took up the work of teaching in the záwiya of Sheikh Naṣr, which was afterwards known as the Ghazálí záwiya. How long he taught there we do not know; but finally he fled from Damascus, and continued his life of wandering, though not now, as we surmise, as a faqír. The story told of the circumstances which led to his leaving Damascus may have some basis in fact, though the incident cannot have occurred in the Amína Madrasa.¹ The reason suggested for his leaving the city: namely, that he was afraid that he might become self-conceited through hearing his name quoted as an 'authority', is a little difficult to accept. More probably, he was shocked that he, whose sole aim had been to oppose *taqlid*; was quoted as an authority, and therefore he left the city. It may have been at this time that he went to Egypt, visiting Cairo and Alexandria, in which latter place he is said to have stayed some time. That by Misr is to be understood Cairo, is certain from the clause which follows the statement that he went to Misr, and which reads, 'and from there he went to Alexandria.'² In Alexandria he may have heard of the 'justice' of Ibn Tashfín, and though the story that he intended to go to the West, but gave up the idea on hearing of the death of Ibn Tashfín³ cannot refer to this period of his life,

¹ See p. 19.² *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 10.³ See p. 19.

there is nothing in it in itself which is improbable. It has simply, it would seem, been misplaced by As-Şubkî, and probably belongs to a later period. It would seem that he never forgot what he had heard in Alexandria of the 'justice' of the Sultân of the West, and when he was at Naysabûr and found, after the death of his patron Fakhr Al-Mulk, that his opponents were many, and the attacks on him were unscrupulous and bitter, he remembered what he had heard of Ibn Tashfîn, and was planning to go to the West when he heard of the death of this ruler.

From Alexandria he wandered again, we know not whither. During what remained of his years of 'retirement', he revisited Baghdad, we are told, and opened a majlis for preaching and teaching the Iḥyâ'. He was not, however, one of the regular teachers of the Madrasa, for he was still in semi-retirement. How long he remained there we have no means of judging.

Again we find him at Hamadân, but have no particulars of his life or work there. All we know of this visit or residence at Hamadân, is what he tells us himself in the *Munqidh*,¹ namely, that he wrote one of his books in answer to a question put to him there.

Probably the greater part of these remaining years was spent in his native town of Tûs: for, some time during his wanderings, he must have entered into correspondence with his family. He had no sons, but only daughters, and one of these apparently remained at Baghdad.² They

¹ p. 26.

² Sayyid Murtaḍâ, p. 18.

evidently wrote or sent messages to him urging him to come home, and at last he did so.

The account given us by 'Abd Al-Gháfir of this residence at Tús, leads to the conclusion that his stay there was prolonged. The following is a summary of what this biographer says. He then¹ returned to his native place, living in seclusion in his house, busying himself in meditation, and observing the appointed times of prayer. Here he was sought out and visited by those who desired instruction in the way of the Šúfis. He continued this life of piety and devotion (during which he apparently also wrote) till his books and writings became known everywhere, and were accepted without contradiction.²

Towards the close of this period, the decay of religion, in both faith and practice, began to lie heavy on his heart. We have already seen³ what he himself wrote about this period, and his grief at what he saw around him. Yet, though he felt an inward call to come out again into the world, and take up the work of a reformer, when the outward summons came, he greatly hesitated to answer it.

Fakhr Al-Mulk, now vizier, having heard of the fame of Al-Ghazáli as a pious devotee and a learned theo-

¹ The 'then' of 'Abd Al-Gháfir, may, without undue violence to the grammar, be taken as a continuation of what he says of Al-Ghazáli's wanderings and visitings of the shrines, and may thus be included in the almost ten years' of which he has already spoken.

² *Tabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 108.

³ pp. 11, 12

logian, visited him at Tūs, and having satisfied himself that this was a man such as he sought, and that the reports which he had heard were not without foundation, invited him to come to Naysabūr and undertake the work of teaching in the Nizāmiyya Madrasa there. After repeated urging, Al-Ghazālī consented to go. This was in Dhū'l-Qa'da A.H. 499.¹

Al-Ghazālī, then, went to Naysabūr, but he was to enjoy the patronage of Fakhr Al-Mulk for less than two months.² His life here was full of trouble and discord. He was attacked and slandered, and apparently had none to protect him. Through it all, 'Abd Al-Ghāfir tells us, he kept silent, writing no word in reply. But his very silence was suspected at first even by his friends as arising from mere disdain of his opponents, and his calmness in the midst of criticism was attributed merely to hypocrisy. It is not surprising that he thought of the 'justice' of Ibn Tashfīn, and purposed seeking a refuge in the West.³ But hearing of his death, he turned his eyes again to his native city, and sought in retirement at Tūs the peace and quiet which was denied him at Naysabūr. As he had foreseen, the attempt to do the work of a reformer, without the protection of a strong ruler, was doomed to failure.

¹ There is a story that Nizām Al-Mulk (this must be an error for Fakhr Al-Mulk) had before this written to him asking him to return to Baghdad, but that Al-Ghazālī declined to go. This letter of refusal, though perhaps not genuine, is given in the biography at the end of the edition of the *Mishkāt* referred to in the list of books.

² Fakhr Al-Mulk was assassinated in Muharram, A.H. 500.

³ See p. 19.

And so, in the closing years of his life, we find him back again in 'retirement' among his personal friends and disciples at Tús, where he had charge of a Madrasa for students and a Khanqah or monastery for Šúfis.

During these last years, he took up more carefully than he had done before the study of tradition (ḥadīth). As-Subkí tells us that at the very close of his life he began to study ḥadīth and heard the two Ṣaḥíḥs, that of Muslim, and that of Bukḥarí, and adds that had he lived longer he would, in a very short time, have surpassed all who preceded him by his knowledge of this branch of learning.¹

From As-Sam'ání, quoted by As-Subkí,² we learn that in order to study this subject, he summoned³ Abú Fityán 'Umar bin Abú Al-Ḥasan Ar-Rawásí, the Ḥáfiẓ of Tús. As-Subkí adds, 'And I have no doubt about his hearing the traditions in his earlier days, and that he gave himself to the work of hearing them at the end of his life. And he did not relate any traditions' (*lam tattafiq lahu 'r-rawáya*). This, of course, does not mean that he did not quote them. As a matter of fact he used them freely, and quoted very carelessly, for doing which he has often been criticized, and was indeed blamed during his lifetime.⁴

He passed away on Monday, the 14th of Jumádi II, in the year A.H. 505 (A.D. 1111).⁵ His brother Aḥmad

¹ *Ṭabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 109

² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³ Sayyid Murtaḍá says (p. 19), invited to Tús.

⁴ See *Iqtisád*, pp. 96, 97.

⁵ *Ṭabaqát*, vol. iv, p. 110.

gives the following account of his last moments. 'When it was Monday, at the time of the morning prayer, my brother performed his ablutions, and prayed, and said, "Bring me the winding-sheet." And he took it and kissed it, and laid it on his eyes, and said, "I hear and obey to go in to the King." Then he extended his legs, and turned towards the Qibla, and departed to the good-will of God, May He be exalted.'¹

He was buried outside Tābarán (Tūs).²

¹ Sayyid Murtadā, p. 11, quoting from the Kitāb ath-thabāt 'inda'l-imamāt of Ibn Al-Jāwzi

² The Rev. S. M. Zwemer, D.D., has kindly permitted me to peruse two letters from the Rev. Dwight M. Donaldson of Meshed, Persia, giving an account of two visits to Tūs (Tābarán). From these letters we learn that there is still to be seen outside of the city a tomb which Mr. Donaldson believes to be that of Abū Hāmid. This may well be so, but it is not absolutely certain; for As-Subkī tells us (*Tabaqāt*, vol. iii, p. 35 f.) that there was an ancestor, Abū Hāmid Aḥmād bin Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī who was already famous and whose tomb in the burial ground outside of Tūs was well known in his day. As-Subkī received his information as to the existence of this tomb from Jamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Al-Jamālī, who himself had visited it. This former Al-Ghazālī (Al-Ghazālī Al-Māqī) as he was called, was either the uncle or the grand-uncle of Abū Hāmid of whom we have written.

For a photograph of this tomb, see Dr. Zwemer's *Islām at its Best*. Mr. Donaldson, in his second letter, writes 'You will notice that "Ghazālī" appears on the stone to have been spelled with a tashdeed, and yet the mark we have considered a tashdeed is not the usual form (v instead of u).'

It is to be noted that the name commonly written by Europeans 'Omar Al-Khayyām is written by the Arab Historians and Biographers 'Omar Al-Khayyāmī.

CHAPTER II

HIS RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

WHEN Al-Ghazālī, as a lad, following the advice of his Šūfī guardian, resolved to devote himself to theological studies, he did so with no other object than that of gaining a living. He intended simply to prepare himself for a profession, and felt no higher call. In later life, he used to say, according to a story which has come down to us, 'We became students for the sake of something else than God, but He was unwilling that it should be for aught but Himself.'¹

Our principal authority for a knowledge of Al-Ghazālī's intellectual struggles and religious experiences, is the *Munqidh min ad-Ḍalāl*, in which he tells his own story. The book was written when he was more than fifty years old, and may be regarded as covering practically the whole of his life. From it we learn that he passed through two great crises, one intellectual and the other spiritual.

In his early years he was wholly without any vital religion or personal experience. He professed Islām only because he had been brought up in the faith, and he performed the recognized duties of the religion and in every way conformed to the current practices solely as a matter

¹ Macdonald, p. 75; S. M. p. 7; As-Subkī iv, p. 102.

of use and wont. He was a believer not from conviction, but from birth and training. It was not long, however, before he began to ask himself questions, and his keen mind soon saw that he knew not why he 'believed'.

Before his twentieth birthday had passed he had wholly freed himself from the bonds of 'taqlíd',¹ and his mind was completely unsettled about those beliefs which he had inherited from the past. It was not that he doubted the teachings of the faith in themselves, but that he did not feel that there was any assurance or proof that these teachings were correct. He could not accept them simply on the authority of human teachers. 'The fathers have said so, therefore the thing is true,' was to him no proof. Indeed, he perceived, as he says elsewhere, that the 'authority of the fathers' and the influence of traditional belief and practice have been the two great stumbling-blocks in the path of the prophets in all times. The faith of his childhood might be true, but it was not his own. He wanted 'proof' so that he might know for himself that these things were so.

Let us hear his own words. 'The thirst for realities was my custom and practice from the very beginning—from the earliest period of my life. It was something implanted, an innate disposition which God had placed in my very nature, and had nothing to do with my own choice and ability. And so the fetters of "taqlíd" were broken, and I was completely unsettled in my inherited

¹ By 'taqlíd' is meant the acceptance of dogma, method of argument, or practice, on the mere ground of human authority without any proof of its truth or reasonableness.

beliefs about the time when my childish days were over. For I saw that the children of the Christians never grew up other than Christians, and the children of the Jews never grew up other than Jews, and the children of the Muslims never grew up other than Muslims; and I had heard the traditional saying reported of the Prophet, 'Every child is born with a natural disposition (to the true religion, Islám), and then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian.' My mind was moved to search out the nature both of this original disposition (of the child), and of the accidental beliefs imposed on him by the authority of his parents and teachers, and the distinctive elements among these 'traditional' beliefs which are at first received by hearsay, and concerning which there is great divergence of opinion in the matter of discriminating what is true from what is false in them.

'So I said to myself, "Seeing that my aim is to attain to a knowledge of the reality of things, it is indispensable to ascertain what knowledge means." (When I investigated this) I saw that certitude is a knowledge whereby the thing known is so laid bare that there can remain no doubt about the matter, no possibility of error, and no possibility that (the opinion held) is mere conjecture; and that the mind will have no place for regarding (the conclusion reached) as merely probable (I saw, further, that in order) that the mind may have a sense of absolute security of being free from error, it is necessary that (the knowledge) be so closely associated with certainty that if, for example, one who possessed the power of changing a stone into gold, or a stick into a serpent, were

to challenge to show its falsity, even then there could arise no doubt or uncertainty (in my mind).'¹

Al-Ghazālī goes on to tell us how he then began to examine by this criterion what knowledge he had, and how he soon found that none of it was certain except that which was attained through the senses, and the axiomatic principles. A closer examination of knowledge attained through the senses soon brought him to see that even this was not wholly trustworthy. The senses are often deceived. For example, what is large may appear to be small simply because it is at a distance. The glowing end of a stick moved rapidly with a circular motion gives the impression of a ring of fire, yet there is no ring of fire. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that one cannot absolutely rely on the senses.

He then fell back on axiomatic principles, such as, 'Ten is greater than three;' 'Affirmation and negation cannot coexist;' and said to himself that he must rely on reason alone. But again doubt arose within him, and this doubt was strengthened by the reflection that when one dreams one believes to be true what on waking one finds to be false; and he thought that it might well be that even those axioms though appearing undoubtedly true in his present state might prove to be false were he to pass into another state. The Śūfīs claimed to pass into a state in which they saw things that were not in accordance with either sense-perceptions or the perceptions of the reason. 'Perhaps also,' he said to himself,

¹ *Al-Munqidh*, p. 4.

'death is a state in which what to a living man appears to be true may be seen to be false.'

This period of doubt and uncertainty must have continued for a long time. For, though we are not to understand from what he says that he came to this final state in his early youth, yet the seeds of doubt were sown early, and the plant grew year by year till at last the fruit formed and ripened, and he found himself a thorough sceptic.

His condition was now miserable: he believed he could not rely even on reason, and he felt himself on the verge of madness. Whither to turn for escape he knew not, and for two months he wandered in the blackness of intellectual despair. At the end of these two unhappy months, during which he still continued to profess Islām and to conform outwardly to all the practices of the faith, he found deliverance. His escape, he says, was due to a light which God caused to penetrate into his heart.

At first sight, it appears a little difficult to determine exactly what Al-Ghazālī meant when he said that his escape from intellectual despair was due to this light. One thing seems clear from the outset; he does not intend to assert that he received a revelation of any particular truth. The light which shone into his darkness did not reveal 'truth': that had still to be sought and found; but it brought to him a personal faith in God, and in Islām as the true revelation of God through Muḥammad. Up to this moment of his life, we must remember, he had had no personal faith; he was a 'believer' simply from birth and training; but now, suddenly, he was awakened,

and led to accept Islām. He was impelled to do so, not from the force of any arguments (the intellectual proof came afterwards), but by a sudden impulse of faith, which he could not explain except on the ground that it proceeded from divine enlightenment. The thought appears to have come into his mind as a *flash* bringing hope—that inspiration and revelation are actual possibilities; that all human knowledge of religious truth depends ultimately on revelation; and that this alone could give authority to any teaching. In the *Minhāj*¹ there is a passage which appears to throw considerable light on this period of his life. It is evidently a summary of the conclusions which he reached through his own experiences as related in the *Munqidh*. He says that when a man first awakens to the need of service and of stripping himself in order to enter the path of service, it is by a heavenly suggestion from God and a special divine help or direction. This he says is the meaning of the words of the Qur'ān, 'God opens the heart to Islam.'² The first step after this, he says, is to attain to a true *knowledge*.³

Further light on this subject is to be found in other passages in his writings. For instance, in the *Fayṣal at-Tafriqa*, he tells us that the very syllogisms of logic, on which all true reasoning and argument depend, he deduced (or rather he became assured of their reliability) from the method of argument which is employed in the Qur'ān in appealing to human reason. Apparently he said to himself, 'If the divine mind can base arguments

¹ p. 3.

² Sura vi, 125.

³ See also what he says in the section on Repentance in the *Iḥyā'*.

on certain principles and axioms, these must be absolutely reliable, and the human mind can without fear of error reason on the same grounds.'

But he went even further. When he spoke of 'revelation', he meant not merely the inspiration of the prophets and the saints, but the enlightenment of the ordinary human mind whereby it is enabled to judge between truth and falsehood. It is this same light which has enabled men to understand the teaching of the Qur'án.¹

Henceforth he sought to find out *truth* by the help of this light. By faith he had accepted the Qur'án as the Word of God, and Muḥammad as the prophet of God, and now he set out to seek truth which he believed must be in conformity with the words of the book, and the teachings and practices of the prophet; and *reason* is the guide of the individual believer to show him wherein this conformity consists. All that can be proved by reason is to be accepted, unless the premises from which the 'proof' starts are not self-evident, or are in contradiction to the Qur'án. Nothing that can be 'demonstrated' to be true is to be rejected because it appears to be contrary to the words of the Qur'án. Rather must one examine the interpretation which has been put upon the words, for the two must agree; and that interpretation which accords with reason must be the true interpretation.

This crisis of his life must have been reached either while he was still at Naysabúr, or during his stay at the camp of Nizám al-Mulk, more probably during the earlier period. With renewed energy he now proceeded to

¹ See *Iqtisá*, p. 2.

examine the teachings of those who professed to be seekers after truth. 'When God, by his favour and abundant goodness, had healed me of this sickness, I saw that those who are Seekers (after truth) may be classified under four heads: (1) Scholastic Theologians (the Mutakallimín) who claim that they follow opinion (ra'y) and speculation (nadh'r). (2) The Báṭiníyya, who pretend that they follow 'teaching', and are peculiarly the possessors of knowledge acquired from an errorless Imám. (3) The Philosophers, who profess to rely on logic and demonstration. (4) The Mystics (Šúfis) who claim that they are the people that are near to the divine presence, and enjoy vision and ecstatic revelation (al-Mukáshafa).¹

In the teachings of one or other of these classes he looked to find a *reasonable* explanation of the seen world and a *reasonable* interpretation of revealed religion. The uneducated man may find it enough to accept the teachings of the book as they stand without further investigation; but the educated thinker cannot be so easily contented; he wishes and must have an explanation of the faith that is in him.

Al-Ghizálí first studied the teachings and the methods of the Mutakallimín, the Scholastic Theologians. He found them to be a class which having accepted certain beliefs defended them against all unorthodoxy and heretical innovation; but he was unsatisfied with their methods of arguing, seeing that they never tried to show the absolute truth of their beliefs, but started with certain premises which they demanded their opponents should

¹ *Al-Munqidh*, p. vii.

grant on the ground either of authority (taqlíd), or universal consent (ijmá'), or mere acceptance of the literal words of the Qur'án, or tradition (akhbár); but the truth or falsity of these premises they would never consent to examine. Indeed, they were, for the most part, incapable of discussing matters with an outsider or sceptic who would not grant their premises, for they introduced the principle of 'authority' into matters which were not self-evident. It is true, he says, that the later Mutakallimín also investigated 'substances' and 'accidents' and the laws which govern these, but seeing that these were not the real object of their study, which, as already stated, was to bolster up orthodoxy and fight against all heretical innovation, their theology (kalámahum) did not satisfy. He, therefore, found nothing to give him assurance from this class of 'Seekers'.

His study of the Mutakallimín and their methods must have been completed either before he went to Baghdad, or during the first year of his residence there. It is probable that *Risálat al-Qudsiyya* and the *Iqtisád fi'l-I'tiqád* were the outcome of these studies in Kalám.¹

¹ In the *Jawáhir al-Qur'án*, p. 25, he tells us that he wrote on Kalám—with the object of preserving the faith of the common people from errors and innovations—the *Risálat al-Qudsiyya* and the *Iqtisád fi'l-I'tiqád*. And in the *Kitáb al-Arba'in*, p. 27, he says that he wrote the *Risálat al-Qudsiyya* to give proofs of the faith, and that this book is one of the sections (the third) of *Quwá'id al-'Aqá'id* which is the second Rub'a of the *Ihyá'* (as Professor Macdonald has suggested) and that the *Iqtisád* gives more detailed proofs. The theory that the *Risálat al-Qudsiyya* was written for the people of Jerusalem (al-Quds) is therefore proved to be wrong; it was called the *Risálat al-Qudsiyya* because it treated of God's Nature (Quds).

It is to be noted that it was not the theology of the Mutakallimín so much as their methods of argument in support of their dogmas that Al-Ghazálí rejected. Their dogmas, for the most part, he accepted, but on other grounds than those of *authority*. In the *Mizán al-'Amal*, he repeatedly states that he will teach the Faith by a means or method which will bring *assurance*, while the teachings of the Mutakallimín produce at best a weak faith, because it makes one dependent on fallible man and does not take one back to the prophet and the Qur'án. By this *method* he means the use of *reason* applied to the understanding of the teachings of the Qur'án and the prophet, and to the developing of these teachings on a logical basis. There were, he says, two extreme parties—those who followed mere human authority, without investigating thoroughly the truth of the teachings of these 'authorities' (this class was the Mutakallimín); and those who followed reason alone, without listening to the voice of revelation (by this class he appears to mean the Mu'tazilites). Both parties are extremists, and both are alike to be condemned. The true path follows a middle course. One must depend on *revelation* and use *reason* to understand it and explain it. Reason is 'the sense of sight', the Qur'án is 'the light-shedding sun'. He who refuses to employ reason and appeals only to the Qur'án, is like a man who professes to see by the light of the sun while he keeps his eyes shut. He is no better than a blind man. But reason with revelation is light upon light.

He passed on, then, to consider the second class, the Philosophers. His study of these was carried on at

Baghdad, and he spent practically three years on them. The first two years were occupied with the study of their systems, and the third year was given to meditation on these after he had thoroughly mastered them. Apparently he was led to take up this study by what he had seen of the way in which the Mutakallimín sometimes denied the teachings of the philosophers without having, as was plain from what they said, first made sure that they understood these teachings. He saw that to be able to refute any teaching it was absolutely necessary first to study and understand it.

But during the whole time he was at Baghdad he was occupied in teaching and in writing books, and it was only his leisure that he was able to give to what may be called his private researches, which he carried on, as it were, in secret without the help of any teacher, relying solely on books for his information. It is not necessary for the purpose in hand to enumerate the classes into which he divided the philosophers or to give any summary of his account of them, or of his arguments against them. All that we need say is that in them he found no satisfaction. Professor Macdonald has suggested that in the *Maqásid al-Falásifa* we probably have the result of his two years of study, and in the *Taháfut*, the result of the further year of meditation. This may well be so.¹

¹ Professor Macdonald, p. 98, approves the suggestion of Gosche that the *Maqásid* and the *Mi'yar al-'Ilm* are one book referred to under different titles. This, however, is not so. Both books have been published in Cairo. In the *Encyclopædia of Islám* under the article *Ghazálí* Professor Macdonald, reviews the two books.

So far, Al-Ghazálí, though firmly established in his belief in the truth of Islám, had found no answer to the questions which his enquiring mind had put. Islám was creed and law; he wanted a theological system, and, above all, a living religion whereby he might feel that he could find access to God and some means of escape from the thralldom of his lower nature.

About this time, so Al-Ghazálí informs us, the sect of the Ta'limites were making themselves unusually objectionable to the authorities and were troubling the faith of many, and he had in mind to study carefully their teachings and refute them. While he was proposing this to himself, he was asked by the Khalífa Mustadhhir, who had lately succeeded his father, to write a book exposing these heretical teachings. He did so with great pleasure; indeed, he was not content to write one book only, for he mentions two which apparently he wrote about this time, the *Mustadhhir* and the *Hajjat al-Hall*, and three others; one, the *Mufaṣṣil al-Khiláf*, written in answer to a question put to him in later years at Hamadán, another, the *Daraj al-Marqúm bi'l-Jadáwil*, in reply to a question put to him at Tús when he had retired there after his wanderings in Syria and elsewhere, and the third, the well-known *Qustás al-Musta'im*.

His position towards the teachings of the Ta'limites was that if any one wishes to follow an impeccable authority he need only follow the Prophet, who was the true Errorless Imám, and whose teachings and example

¹ A branch of the Báṭiniyya.

were available, while the Hidden Imám, in whom the Ta'limites professed to believe, could not be consulted, even supposing he existed, for one could not be for ever travelling to seek his advice; and further, in most cases the need was for immediate advice, and the occasion would have passed before one could reach him.

He had already, as we have seen, found a basis for thought and knowledge, namely, Revelation; and a theology which was based on this revelation and developed through reason; but he still found that he had not yet reached the goal he sought.

There was a further knowledge which was claimed by the Šúfis, based not on reason, but on experience and direct divine enlightenment, and he now began to examine the teachings of the Šúfis, if, peradventure, these would bring him to that further knowledge which he sought. He had, of course, studied Šúfí teaching before this, just as he had studied other branches of learning before he began those special investigations of which he tells us in the *Munqidh*; but his early studies of Šúfism had apparently been slight, and if we are to trust the story told by Ash-Sha'rání on the authority of Muḥyí'ud-Dín,¹ he had but little faith in the sincerity of the claims which were made by the Šúfis; and when he attempted to gain some personal experience of these he failed to find satisfaction. All that he had then been able to attain to was a purer and clearer knowledge but not the unveiling (*mukáshafa*) of which he had heard.

¹ See Macdonald, p. 90 f. and As-Subkí iv, p. 109

In his present studies he depended on the *Qūt al-Qulūb* (Nourishment of the Hearts) by Abú Ṭálib al-Makkí, the works of al-Háarith al-Muḥásibí, and the scattered remains of Al-Junaid, Ash-Shibli, Abú Yazíd al-Bistámí, and others, as well as on the guidance of living Šúfis whom he consulted.

It was not long before he found that here at last, in all probability, he had come across that of which he was in search. But, at the same time, he perceived that Šufí knowledge was to be acquired not by study but by practice. He reasoned, for instance, that to know wherein health consists, is not the same as to have good health; to understand what intoxication is, is quite another thing from being intoxicated; and similarly, to know the teachings and practices of the Šufís, is not the same as to experience their ecstasies. He saw that he had reached the furthest limit which was to be reached unless he actually became a Šufí.

He tells us that his studies had so far brought him to a firm and unshakable belief in three things—God, Inspiration, and the Last Judgement. Here ended the second period of his inner life.

The third period was brief in time, but intense in the experiences through which he passed. It began about Jum'adí II of the year A.H. 488, and lasted for six months. During it he had his first real spiritual experiences. Hitherto he had sought mere intellectual truth, and apparently it was his studies in Šufíism that opened his eyes to see that the needs of the soul are not to be satisfied by mere theology and a knowledge of

jurisprudence. These can never give a man a vital religion or prove a means of access to God and a path of deliverance from sin and evil. Man's chief need, he saw, was some way of escape from all that is sinful and base within him. He had learned from the Šúfis that this was to be accomplished through attaining nearness to God, and that this nearness to God could be reached through religious practices which separated a man from the visible world, the unreal world, and opened his mind and soul to the divine realities, so that he became capable of receiving that divine inspiration which alone can purify the soul.¹

All this, I say, he had already learned, and now he began to realize that, in spite of knowing it, he was himself making no advance in growth in his spiritual life; and he became convinced that he never could progress so long as he continued his present manner of life. He felt the necessity of withdrawing from public life that he might then be able to retire and practise what he now believed to be the only way to peace of mind here on earth and of salvation hereafter.²

But he could not at once bring himself to give up his position with its hopes of advancement, and fame.

¹ The true Šúfi, according to Ash-Sha'rání, does not even seek to get near God; he only seeks to separate himself from the world and all sense perceptions, to empty himself, in fact, so that God Himself may fill him. See *Kitáb al-Anvar al-Qiddisiyya*.

² Salvation is used here to mean absolute escape from the torments of hell. According to Al-Ghazálí very few thus escape. Only those do so who have completely purified themselves; while the others pass for a shorter or longer time through the fires to be cleansed. All true Muslims will enter Paradise, but most of them have to be first purged of their sins, in the fires of hell.

It was in Rajab 488, he tells us, that this crisis began. Time and again he resolved to retire from the world, and time and again the morning found him still unable to carry out the resolutions of the previous evening. • As the weeks and months passed by the struggle with his conscience induced physical illness, and finally his physicians told him that there was no hope of recovery unless the causes of his trouble, which they recognized were not physical, were removed. At last in the prospect of possible death there opened up before him, to use the words of a later writer, a door of fear. The terrors of hell, such as he himself has described in the *Iḥyá'*, laid hold upon him. When he saw that there was no other hope before him, he finally sought refuge in God; and God, he says, answered him and made the renunciation easy. In Dhú'l-Qa'da A.H. 488 he left Baghdad.

During these years of retirement his character became wholly changed, and he became a humble seeker after God where before he had been a proud and ambitious theologian.

As-Subkí tells us¹ how 'Abd al-Gháfír has recorded that he often visited Al-Ghazálí after he had returned to Naysabúr at the request of Fakhr al-Mulk, and wondered at what he saw. In his earlier days Abú Hámid had been noted for the disdain and contempt with which he would treat his opponents as men almost on a level with the senseless brutes. His very glance and look were full of scorn; and when 'Abd al-Gháfír saw him now apparently so changed he could not at first believe that

¹ *Ṭabaqát*, vol iv, pp. 108, 109.

his present behaviour was not the result of some deep hypocrisy 'the pride which apes humility'. Yet on closer examination he came to realize that the change had actually taken place, and that he was like a man who had recovered his senses after a period of madness.

In Chapter I we have already told the story of how his brother Aḥmad openly rebuked him in Baghdad for his hypocrisy. It shows that, though Abú Ḥámid could write and preach on the duties of the believer, he did not himself follow his own teaching.

He confesses in the *Munqidh* that, even in his work of lecturing and writing in Baghdad, he was actuated not by pure motives, but by the desire of fame and glory and position.

How greatly he had changed that other story shows us which tells how in the *Khanqah* at Damascus he undertook the lowest of menial work, that of cleansing the ablution tanks of the *Khanqah*. Here was the famous Imám of Baghdad, behind whom thousands used to rank themselves for the public prayers, performing work befitting the meanest slave in the city.

Here we leave him for the present, but in another chapter we shall ask whether after all he found Him whom his soul desired.

CHAPTER III

AL-GHAZÁLÍ'S THEOLOGICAL POSITION

IN the present chapter we shall consider the theological position which Al-Ghazálí attained without attempting to discuss the question of how he reached it. At the very outset let us say that he was an orthodox Muslim. So far as can be seen from his writings, he never, at any time, challenged any of the essential doctrines of Islám. Even during the period of his doubt, he had no quarrel with the doctrines as doctrines; he doubted, not their truth or reasonableness, but whether the human reason could know anything at all with certainty. The Faith, from the point of view of its truth or falsity, he never even criticized. When he emerged from this crisis, he emerged, an orthodox Muslim, convinced by *faith* of the truth of Islám; and all his subsequent investigations were carried on with the object of establishing the reasonableness of its doctrines and practices, and 'proving' them by an appeal to the ultimate authority of *revelation*. The doctrines of what was orthodox Islám in his day, he accepted; but his struggle with the scholastic theologians, nevertheless, was vital and bitter.

To understand what this controversy meant, we must look first at the position which these theologians occupied. Around the simple and unsophisticated faith of the early days, they had, in course of time, built up a system of

theology and religious philosophy which very few even of themselves were able fully and clearly to comprehend. But not merely so; they had further built around this a system of outer defences supporting the inner citadel of the faith; and the whole of these works they claimed as being of the essence of Islám. A man might be willing to accept, for instance, the doctrine of the Unity of God, but unless he were also willing to accept the theology which they had developed in explanation of this doctrine, and was able to enter into all the intricacies of their scholastic reasonings, they would hardly concede to him the name of 'believer'.

The practical result of their position was that the right of the unlearned man to the name of 'mu'min' (believer) was denied. They looked down on the common and unenlightened people as practically outside the pale of Islám; and each clique, and there were almost innumerable existing cliques, regarded all outsiders as unbelievers; nor were they slow to damn and commit each other to the fires of hell.¹

It was against all this that Al-Ghazálí's life and work were a protest. This was the traditional system that he fought; and the struggle was no kid-glove contest. He designated it as 'Taqlíd'—the acceptance of systems, dogmas, practices, madhhabs (sectarian differences), and stereotyped 'methods of proof' solely on authority. The whole vast scheme he absolutely scorned. On this point he makes his position very clear. He reminded men that the greatest obstacle to the success of the prophets

¹ See *Faysal*, section 10.

has always been an obstinate clinging to the beliefs and ways of the 'fathers', and a refusal to examine these beliefs and practices to see whether they were well-founded or not.

In the *Iqtisád*,¹ speaking of the manner in which men accept beliefs and practices on other than reasonable grounds, he says that few men, other than the saints whom God has strengthened, are able consistently to take reason alone as a guide. Most thinkers follow merely their own school of thought, and often reject teachings and truths simply because they are the tenets of another school. Thus, he says, you will find no difficulty in persuading an uneducated Mu'tazilite to accept many statements as reasonable, if he does not know that these are the views of the Ash'arites, for example. But, as soon as he finds that these are Ash'arite positions, he will utterly reject them. And, *vice versa*, an Ash'arite will absolutely refuse to accept views which he knows are held by the Mu'tazilites, solely and simply because they are those of an opposing school of thought. This bigoted following of a 'school' irrespective of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of its tenets is, he says, not confined to the unlearned. Let us quote his own words: 'And I do not say that this is the nature of the common people, but it is the nature of most of those whom I have seen who are marked as learned men. For they do not differ from the common people in the matter of tradition (*taqlíd*). Nay, they have added to the tradition of the sect (*madhhab*), the tradition of demonstration; for, in their

¹ p. 77.

investigation, they do not seek the truth, but seek some method of subterfuge to support what they have accepted as the truth by hearsay and tradition (*taqlīd*). So, if in their investigation they meet with anything which supports their beliefs, they say: "We have got hold of a proof;" and if anything appears to weaken their sectarian belief (*maḍḥhab*), they say, "We have come across something doubtful." Thus, they set up the belief, grasped and accepted by tradition, as a principle; and they call "doubtful" whatever is contrary to it, and a "demonstration" whatever agrees with it. But the right way of doing is the contrary of this; for one must have no belief (preconceived ideas) to start with; but must look at the demonstration, and call what it demands, the "truth", what is opposed to it "the false."¹

Against this narrow and hide-bound system, Al Ghazālī waged bitter warfare. He saw clearly that with such a conception of the proper means of supporting religion, there could be no future for the Faith; and in opposition to it he took his stand for freedom of thought and liberty of judgement. Yet, as we have said, he was an orthodox Muslim, holding all the essential doctrines of the Faith, though claiming that there was a better and more reasonable way of maintaining and proving these doctrines than that of mere appeal to 'tradition'.²

¹ *Iqtīṣād*, p. 77.

² With this claim for freedom must be compared what he says in the *Maḍnūn bihi*, p. 37 ff. where he really urges what amounts to a *taqlīd* acceptance of orthodox Islām by the common people. He scorned *taqlīd* as an investigator, he demands its acceptance by the common people, as a reformer. See further, chapter v.

Let us digress here a moment to explain that while he denied the authority of 'tradition' (taqlíd), he was whole-hearted in his acceptance of the authority of what is usually called 'the traditions' (ḥadīth and ākhbār). Along with the authority of the Qur'án, as the foundation of religious knowledge, he accepted also, as trustworthy sources of knowledge of the divine will, the words of the Prophet, and his example; as well as the actions and sayings of those who had been 'Companions' of the Prophet, and were, therefore, presumably, better acquainted with his views and thoughts than those who came later.

To return, Al-Ghazálí, in opposition to the current systems of the schools, maintained and expounded his position.

He taught that religion consists of three parts -Belief, Works, and Experience. What he had to say on the first two divisions, we shall briefly now consider: the third will be taken up in a later chapter, when we speak of Al-Ghazálí as *Šúfí*.

In the *Minháj*, the last book he composed, he explains at considerable length the various stages through which the Seeker or Traveller must pass when once he has come to realize that God exists and claims his services. We have already seen¹ that he claims that all true religious knowledge depends ultimately on revelation. Reason alone cannot lead one to God, or form the foundation of religious knowledge. There are sciences in which reason alone is supreme and fully competent, depending

¹ Chapter ii.

on sense—perceptions and axiomatic principles for their fundamentals. But the fact that philosophical (i.e. non-religious) thinkers may be specialists, and in a sense *authorities* in these branches of knowledge, is no guarantee that they are qualified to speak on religious subjects. Their spheres of thought are quite out of touch with religion. If their deductions are logical, they cannot lead to conclusions which are contradictory to the truths of revealed religion, so long as they do not start from mistaken premises: but, at the same time, they cannot lead to religious knowledge. No man by searching can find out God.

God, however, has revealed Himself, and made known His will to mankind: and has done so finally and fully through Muḥammad. To become convinced of this, man does not depend in any way on reason, but on divine enlightenment. Those on whom God bestows His light, accept the revelation, and put their confidence in the revealed word (the Qur'án), and in the Prophet (Muḥammad), who by his examples and sayings did much to interpret the meaning of the word, both in its formal (dogmatic) teachings and in its commands and principles. The reputed sayings of the Companions (the Aṣḥáb), and the words and practices of the Prophet form a secondary, but a hardly less reliable, authority. The Qur'án comes first; but the traditions (*ḥadīth* or *akhbār*) must not be neglected. This acceptance of the authority of the Prophet, and of the Qur'án, which is caused by a divine enlightenment—a heavenly suggestion from God, is, however, merely an awakening. The believer, as we may

now call him, is only a potential believer. By the grace of God, he has become willing to believe; but he has yet to learn what to believe. He has only so far heard, as it were, the divine voice calling him, speaking to him through the word and through the example of the Prophet and his teachings.

Thus, Al-Ghazálí's position may be said to be that every one who accepts Islám, accepts it *by faith*; for reason cannot lead him to it. God's grace, which calls him, when received and accepted, enlightens his reason and gives him the power to understand divine things. The mind willing to obey is the only mind which can have any true knowledge of God. In this Al-Ghazálí stands where all true Christian teachers stand.

The question, however, arises whether, in some cases, God does not employ means for the purpose of bringing a man to accept Islám in faith; and here again, we find Al-Ghazálí taking up a very clear and definite position. He maintains that faith (*imán*) is the light that God casts into the hearts of men, and may find its entrance in many ways. It is the gift of God (*'atíyya wa hadíyya min 'indihi*), and arises sometimes from an inner evidence which cannot be expressed; sometimes through a vision in a dream; sometimes through seeing the state (*ḥál*) of a devout man, and through the passing of his light to him while keeping company with him, and sitting with him; sometimes through accessory circumstances. But as against the position of the Mutakallimín, Al-Ghazálí maintains that while it is just possible that some have been brought to the truth by the study of the

niceties of Kalám, the demand that these put forward that futh is founded on a proper understanding of these niceties, and intricacies, is to be rejected. The Arabs of the time of Muḥammad were not and could not be Mutakallimín. Indeed, he holds that the views of the Mutakallimín in thus restricting the methods by which one may be assured and convinced of the truth of Islám, are pure and absolute *innovation* (bid'a).¹

To return to Al-Ghazálí's conception of the stages through which the seeker passes. Having heard and answered the divine voice calling, the 'believer' is awakened, and now he must take the first step. This consists in learning what the word says; what the Prophet teaches; and what his example entails. It is after accepting Islám that the believer must learn. To do this, he must depend on reason—reason now enlightened by God's grace—to interpret for him the word, and the sayings and doings of the Prophet, and to enable him to deduce from these those things which are not therein fully explained.

In the *Iqtisád*² Al-Ghazálí uses the following illustration to explain the place of reason in this study, and the necessity for its use. Reason is the eye with which one sees; the Qur'án is the light-shedding sun. He who attempts to understand the Qur'án without the use of reason is like a man who attempts to see things by the light of the sun while he keeps his eyes shut. He is in no way different from a blind man. In other words,

¹ See what he says in the *Maḍnun bihi*, p. 37.

² p. 3.

a man who attempts to understand revealed religion without using his reason, simply shuts his eyes in the clear light of day. He sees nothing. But he who uses reason to enable him to see in the bright light of revelation, has light upon light.

It has been said¹ that Al-Ghazálí's watchword was, 'Back to the Qur'án'. The expression may be misleading if it be taken too literally: for, on the one hand, it suggests that Al-Ghazálí rejected the teachings of the theologians of his day, and sought to bring men back to a purer faith; and, on the other hand, it might be taken as meaning that he regarded the Qur'án alone as the true foundation of the faith, which was very far from being the case.

When a man comes, says Al-Ghazálí, to study revealed religion with the help of his now enlightened reason, he will see that there is a God who is All-powerful, Willing, Hearing, Seeing, Speaking, but who is free from all accidents of speech, knowledge, will, etc., far above (*muqaddas*) all imperfections and infirmities: who cannot be described by the attributes of the creature (*al-muh-dathín*) and to whom cannot be attributed the characteristics of the creature: who is not like anything he has created, and whom nothing is like; who is not contained in place or direction, and whom no accidents or infirmities affect.²

He will see, further, when he considers the miracles of the Apostle and his wonderful deeds, and the signs which mark his claim to be a prophet, that he is indeed the

¹ Canon Gairdner in *Der. Islám*, July, 1914.

² See also *Al-Qustás*, p. 89.

Apostle of God, and His *trusty one*, to whom He has given His inspiration.¹ He will see, too, that the fathers (as-salaf) believed assuredly that God can be seen in the world to come, and that He exists, and is not in any circumscribed direction; and that the Qur'án is the word of God, uncreated, without disconnected letters or sounds, seeing that, if it were so, it would be one of His creatures; and that there exists in the seen and in the unseen world (*hîl-mulk wa'l-malakût*) not a movement of the eye but by the determination (*qaḍá*) of God, and His decree (*qadar*) and will (*iráda*) and expressed desire (*mash'at*); and that from Him is the good and the evil, the beneficial and the hurtful, faith and unbelief; and that if He recompense any one, it is of His favour: and if He punish any one, it is of His justice.

He will learn also what the Prophet has spoken of the world to come—such as the day of resurrection; and the torments of the grave; the questioning of Munkir and Nákir; the balance; the bridge (*as-sirát*). For these were the principles accepted by the pious fathers, and were matters of general assent, until 'innovation' spread, and 'flighty fancies' appeared.²

Such is a summary of what the believer must accept as the truth; but the simple-minded man is not bound to understand all the details and niceties which the scholastic theologians spent their time in discussing. If a man can be satisfied without asking the why and the wherefore

¹ See *Al-Qustás*, pp. 82, 83.

² See *Minhaj*, p. 8. For a briefer summary of the essential principles of the Faith, see *Risálat al-Wa'dh*, p. 29.

of all these questions, being simply assured that they were taught by the Qur'án and the Prophet, it will be the better for him, for with most men, enquiry only leads to doubt and often to unbelief.¹

Yet while Al-Ghazálí maintained that the claims of the Mutakallimín were unfounded, and that the simple believer was not called upon to be a thorough theologian, he did hold that the acceptance of the above articles of faith, if we may be allowed to describe them as such, must be an intelligent acceptance. A man must use his reason in judging whether these things are in accordance with the revealed word of God, and the sayings and example of the Prophet. For reason and the teachings of the Qur'án must agree; and, if any teaching of the Qur'án appears to contradict reason, it is not reason which is to be doubted, but the interpretation which has been put upon the words of the Qur'án.

Thus, it will be seen that Al-Ghazálí held that much that was supposed in his day by many to be of the essence of the Faith was in fact non-essential. He who accepts the Qur'án and the Prophet honestly from the heart, and endeavours to carry out the precepts of both, must be considered a good Muslim.² He may make many mistakes in his interpretation of the Qur'án, or in his explanation of sayings and doings of the Prophet; and if he do so, he is to be regarded as a mistaken Muslim, but not as an unbeliever.

¹ *Minhaj*, pp. 36, 37; *Al-Qustás*, p. 88.

² See *Faysal*, section 3.

Al-Ghazálí teachings and influence were, therefore, all on the side of liberty and freedom of judgement.¹ But, as Professor Macdonald has pointed out in the *Encyclopedia of Islám*, Al-Ghazálí at the same time held on certain points intolerant views. He maintained that all who professed to be Muslims ought to be prevented by the strong arm of the civil authorities from doing or saying anything which tends to 'innovation' (*bid'at*) or 'unbelief' (*kufr*).² Nevertheless, on the whole, his work tended to freedom and liberty.³ For, according to him, besides the fact that the essentials of religion are comparatively few, there must always be a distinction made between what a man professes and what he holds between himself and God. Into the latter, no man has a right to enquire.⁴ Of course the two must not be, and indeed cannot be, contradictory; for the faith professed must be a faith of the heart. Of this, however, also, no man has a right to judge. All that man can do is to demand that the Faith be heartily accepted; but as to whether it is so accepted the believer's own profession must be taken as deciding. No man must be refused the name of Muslim who is willing to be known as a Muslim and will profess the Faith outwardly. As already said, where the arm of the law can, and ought to step in is, according to Al-Ghazálí, in demanding that when a man professes Islám he must not also openly profess beliefs which are contrary to the essential principles of the Faith; or so conduct himself that his life is a denial of his outward profession.⁵

¹ See *Faysal*, pp. 2-4.

² See *Maqna'in bihi*, pp. 37, 38, 39.

³ See *Faysal*, sections 3 and 8.

⁴ See *Mizán*, p. 214.

⁵ See also Chapter v.

Al-Ghazálí is sometimes spoken of as a Reformer, and his claim to this name is undeniable. Yet it was not the Faith that he reformed or purified. He introduced no new doctrine; nor did he reject any of the essential doctrines which went in his day, and still go, to make up Islám. What he did was to free Islám from the dead weight of the claim of the scholastic theologians to be the sole guardians of the Faith; and above all, he established the doctrines on a firmer and surer foundation. In the *Mizán*, he repeatedly states that he will teach the doctrines of the Faith in such a manner that a man may have a firm and assured knowledge. He will prove that they are true. It was a new manner or system of proving the doctrines that he established. Even in this, he was not an absolute originator; but it was he, more than any one else, who assured that this new method of proof be recognized in the church of Islám.

It is sad to find that while he established this method of proof in opposition to the favourite one of *taqlíd*, he did not succeed in so opening the minds of Muslim theologians as to lead them to follow him in its use. Whom, after Al-Ghazálí, do we find seeking independently to study the teachings of the Qur'án and the traditions? As a matter of fact, things went back to the old way—not that his proofs were rejected but they were taken as *authority*. He became a new authority, and that was all. His proofs have become stereotyped, and for 800 years, when Muslim theologians have appealed to Al-Ghazálí, they have simply appealed to what he wrote, and, without investigating the doctrines independently, have only studied

the arguments which he established. The process, apparently, began in his own life-time, as we may judge from the story already alluded to of how he entered a school at Damascus, and found the teacher saying 'Al-Ghazálí says.' using his words as a *proof*.

Even to this day, in the Azhar University, it is not the Qur'án and the traditions which are studied; but the teachings of the bygone theologians on the Qur'án and the traditions: and alas, for the irony of it, among them stands Al-Ghazálí.

As regards dogmatics, the work of Al-Ghazálí has been to fix and solidify the system of orthodox theology to such an extent that it is hardly possible to conceive of its ever again becoming a living stream. His books remain; his arguments stand; but his spirit has departed.

It will be seen, then, that Al-Ghazálí occupied a place between the Mu'tazilites and the hide-bound theologians of his day. As Al-Ash'arí accepted the method of the Mutakallimín, and used these against themselves, so Al-Ghazálí accepted the authority of reason, but reason enlightened by faith, which is the light which God casts into the soul, as the only means and standard of interpretation of the Qur'án, the traditions of the Prophet, and the sayings of the Companions (Aṣḥáb).

Professor Macdonald argues that only through a study of Al-Ghazálí is there any hope that Islámic theology will yet break the iron bands by which it is now held. This is true, if we mean by 'a study of Al-Ghazálí' the carrying out of investigation into the teaching of the Qur'án and of the traditions, in the spirit of Al-Ghazálí.

The mere study of his books will lead Islám no further in dogmatics. For he has set it down plainly that in his opinion any opposition to what he considered orthodox Islám, on the part of the contentious, ought to be put down by the power of the sword : and under this class of 'contentious' will undoubtedly be classed all who nowadays seek to dispute the authorized exposition of the Faith.¹

Al-Ghazálí, while he was in some respects a fearless investigator, was yet strongly influenced by his environment, and limited by the conditions of the intellectual attainments of his day. Far in advance of the mass of his contemporaries in many ways, he was yet strongly influenced by the accepted beliefs and superstitions of those around him ; and in much his credulity was amazing. Further, his blind acceptance of the 'Faith of the Fathers'² as the true faith, and their interpretation of traditional belief, is so absolute, that there can be no room, without casting his theories to the winds, for any reconstruction of the Faith, or any other interpretation of the Qur'án.

What Islám requires at present, if it is again to become a living and growing theological system, is a new renovator, who will enter upon his studies in the light of reason emancipated from the darkness of the scholastic modes of thought and of the so-called scientific knowledge which was current in those early times.

Whether there is any room in orthodox Islám for such a renovator is very doubtful. In India all such attempts have been stigmatized as being simply a return to the

¹ See *Maḍmún bihi*, pp. 37 ff.

² See *Ijām*.

position of the Mu'tazilites : and the tendency at present is said to be to a return to the hard and dead theology of ' orthodoxy '.¹

We have already said that according to Al Ghazálí while *belief* is the first, and in one sense the main, element of religion, it must be associated with *works*. In the letter known as *Ayyuhá'l-Walad* he writes that as a man in the desert who has a hundred swords and other weapons is not protected by the mere possession of these from the attacks of a lion, but must use them to defend himself against the wild beast, so the man who has a head-knowledge of a hundred thousand *questions* will find that without works, his knowledge is useless. A sick man may know that certain drugs will cure him : but only a use of these drugs will actually benefit him. A hundred years of study will not prepare a man to meet God. Al-Ghazálí's position may be summarized by adopting the words ' Faith without works is dead.'

In the *Minhá* ³ Al-Ghazálí compares belief (*ilm*) to a tree ; works (*al'ibáda*) are the fruit. The tree has the greater honour, because it bears the fruit : but a fruitless tree is useless. Faith is not an end in itself ; it is only a means to an end. He who believes that God exists ; that he has revealed himself to man, demanding of him certain actions and inner feelings ; that there is a day of judgement lying in the future, when a man shall be called to account for what he has believed and for what he has done, must, unless he is a fool, recognize that the main

¹ See Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 99 and 347.

² p. 99 f.

³ p. 5.

thing, after all, is to live so that he shall escape in the day of judgement. To this end he must learn what the duties are which God requires of him ; and set himself to accomplish them.

But even this is not enough ; for it is not the mere outward performance of certain duties which is required. There are inner feelings and dispositions of the heart which man must know, so that he may be able to rise up against all that is evil or impure within him and acquire all that is pure and noble. This is to be attained through a life of *devotion*.

He tells us in the *Minháj*, that it was in the hope of teaching men the crying need for such a vital religion that he wrote the *Ihyá'*. And he adds that, in rousing men to realize the need of making some real attempt to escape from the deadness of mere formal religion, one of the greatest and strongest influences that can be brought to bear on the human conscience, is that of *fear*. He had found this to be so in his own experience ; it was only the terrors of Hell that finally drove Al-Ghazalí himself to cast himself on God, as he puts it in the *Munqidh*, and abandon the world and all its allurements. Man must be brought to understand the terrors of the Fire, and his own inability to stand the awful torments that await him if he die unrepentant ; so that he may be induced to turn in repentance from the sins and vanities of this world, and seek the favour of God. Only when he realizes the terrors of Hell which yawns before him, will he be aroused to seek to please God, that he may find perchance a way of escape.

¹ See *Minháj*, p. 9, and the section on the description of Hell in the *Ihyá'*.

CHAPTER IV

AL-GHAZÁLÍ AS ŞÚFÍ

IN this chapter we do not propose to describe the life of Al-Ghazálí as a Şúfí, but desire rather to speak in a general way of his teaching on the necessity of vital religion and the possibility of having an experimental knowledge of spiritualities.

We have seen in the preceding chapter that, according to Al-Ghazálí, religion consists of three parts—Belief, Works, Experience of spiritualities : and we have already discussed briefly Al-Ghazálí's position with regard to the first two, which make up what may be called *formal* religion, using the word *formal* in a technical sense : for even with regard to works, he maintains that mere outward obedience to precepts is not sufficient, but must be accompanied by a true desire to please God. As he himself puts it, the believer must in all his quest for a knowledge of divine things, as well as in the punctilious performance of his religious duties, seek all and do all for the glory of God (ta'*dhíman lahu*).

But while the believer must be orthodox in his beliefs and obedient in his service, neither true belief, nor the most punctilious service, nor the two combined, are sufficient to secure him *salvation*, or fit him for the highest joys of the life to come. Orthodoxy in belief, and whole-hearted obedience will undoubtedly secure him ultimate entrance into paradise ; but this is not *salvation* ; while the quality and extent of his future joy and happiness depend on other things than these.

By *salvation*, Al-Ghazálí means absolute escape from the fires of hell. All true Muslims will attain paradise ; but most of them will attain it only after passing, for a shorter or a longer period, through the fires which, while they are penal, are also purgatorial.¹ Thus, the saved, according to Al-Ghazálí, are the few who pass directly into paradise without first entering the fire.²

To attain this salvation, far more is necessary than to be an orthodox and strict Muslim. It is possible that some may escape hell fire through a special and particular outpouring of the abounding mercy of God, or in virtue of the mediation of others ; but such an escape is so problematic that one cannot wisely count upon it.

In holding that the most orthodox faith and the most strict performance of one's religious duties do not afford any guarantee that the believer will escape the torments of hell, Al-Ghazálí was true to the convictions and beliefs of the early Muslims. None of them had any assurance that they would be saved, in this sense of the word. And, in truth, there is no such assurance to be found anywhere in orthodox Muslim teaching. The true believer, must simply submit himself to the divine will. If God please, of His grace, to give him entrance into paradise, without first causing him to pass through the fires of hell, well and good ; it will be a supreme act of grace and mercy. But the believer must be ever ready, should God will it, to pass through the fires, and there expiate the sins and evils of his earthly life.

¹ See *Faysal*, p. 24.

² See *Faysal*, pp. 23, 24 ; *Ihyá'*, p. 136

Orthodox Islám holds out no 'hope of salvation', and can therefore never be a religion of joy and confidence.¹ Nor does Islám point out to a man how he can overcome his sins and evil self, and thus qualify for direct entrance into heaven, and the enjoyment of the highest happiness of which he is capable.

For such a means of cleansing, Muslims in all times have turned to Šúfiism. In the time of Al-Ghazálí, as both before and after his day, there was more than a proneness to distinguish and contrast Islám and Šúfiism. There was, of course, a Šúfiism which was non-Islámic; and there appears to have been a tendency on the part of Muslim Šúfis to break away from formal Islám as soon as they had reached a certain stage in their Šúfi life. In all religions there has been a similar tendency among those who have followed the path of the Mystic.

It must be put to the credit of Al-Ghazálí that, though he was not the first to realize that there could be a Šúfiism which was Muslim as well as a Šúfiism which was non-Muslim, he was, so far as we can judge, the principal agent in bringing about the public recognition of this fact. From the time that his books became generally known, and his views were accepted, there was no further question of denouncing a man as an unbeliever simply because he was a Šúfi. There was even no question of

¹ It is true that for those who die fighting for the faith, the gates of paradise are said to be opened, and this expectation of immediate entrance into the gardens of delight, and escape from the torments of hell fire, has been the cause of much of the fanatical courage which has, from the earliest times, characterized Muslim warriors; but this belief is no real part of the faith as a theological system.

suspecting him solely because he followed the way of the Şúfis.

But while Al-Ghazálí may thus be said to have gained for Şúfiism a recognized place among Muslims, he insisted most strongly that there could be no true Şúfiism apart from revealed religion. There must be a historical foundation for belief and for one's knowledge of God's will, and nothing must be permitted or accepted by the Şúfí which runs counter to this revelation. Şúfiism, he maintains, will never enable a man to dispense with revealed religion, or free him from the duty of performing its prescribed observances.¹ Hell, he says, quoting a reported saying of the Prophet, is full of faqírs, who through wandering away from the truth of revealed religion, have made shipwreck of the faith.

The freedom of the soul from all that fetters it and prevents it from rising, is the object of the seeker; and according to Al-Ghazálí, one of the first things which a man must seek to understand is the mystery of his own nature. Besides the body and the animal spirit which gives the body life, and which man shares with the brute beasts, man has a spirit or soul which is akin to the divine.² It is this which distinguishes him from the lower animals; it is, in fact, the real man. To understand this is a primary necessity. Further, the seeker must learn

¹ *Mishkát*, p. 36.

² The word *akin* must, however, be taken figuratively; for Al-Ghazálí carefully states that when God 'breathed into men' nothing passed out of the divine into the human. Man's soul is not an emanation from God: it is created. See *Maqún Es-Saghir*, p. 51.

the qualities, characteristics and dispositions of this soul ; wherein its nobility consists, and wherein lies the possibility of its defect and ruin. He must know what passions can possess it ; what motives can influence it ; and how these passions and motives may be purified and controlled. A man's life, then, must be a continual struggle. To begin with, he must have clear ideas and thoughts concerning realities and vanities, so that he may know which are the things that are enduring, and which are those that are temporary and evanescent. He must know, in other words, that the world around him is a fleeting show ; that there is an unseen world which deserves more truly the name of *real* ; he must be able to see the difference between truth and falsehood in speaking ; and he must know wherein consists the difference between virtue and vice.

But beyond this struggle to think clearly and judge distinctly and act rightly, there is a further struggle awaiting him ; namely, the struggle against the passions within ; through victory in this struggle, he achieves continence and temperance, using the latter word in its full meaning ; for he has yet to encounter all those emotions of the soul which may be summed up under the one word *anger*. Through conquest of these, he acquires *gentleness*.

But all this, in the life of the Sufí, is but a means to an end ; for even such a life of inward struggle and outward watchfulness, does not of itself qualify him for the highest happiness of which man is capable.

In the world to come, there are degrees and stages—not that the believer passes from one stage to another after

entering therein ; but according as he has prepared and fitted himself in the course of his earthly life, so will he find his happiness in the life to come. The believer's happiness hereafter depends not so much on what he has believed, nor on the strictness with which he has fulfilled his religious duties, but on what he has *been* in himself.

Complete happiness is to be found by each soul in the full satisfaction of those needs and desires, the partial satisfaction of which gives him pleasure here on earth. The true believer who in this world has never advanced beyond the pleasures of the senses, will find his joy and pleasure in the world to come in the complete gratification of the senses ; for the highest and completest happiness of which he will be capable will consist in the full satisfaction of these sensuous desires and appetites.¹

Evidently, Al-Ghazálí held that when the soul returns to the resurrected body, all the desires and appetites of the 'nafs' (the lower nature) remain as they were before death. Those who had purified themselves remain pure ; those who had struggled in vain against the lower nature or had yielded to it without struggle, remain as they were and find in the gratification of the appetites and desires of this nature the highest good and pleasure of which they are capable. The reason why he held this view was that these pleasures are spoken of in the Qur'án, and must be taken as literal, for it is possible to take them so, and according to his canon of interpretation, one must not

¹ *Al-Madnûn bihi*, p. 84. Yet elsewhere he says that the pleasures of the appetites (kul ludhdhbat shahawát ed-dunyá) cease at death, for they depend upon the 'nafs'. *Kimiyá'*, p. 521.

pass from one stage of interpretation to another unless the lower (here, the literal) is impossible.

Similarly, he who finds his chief joy on earth in intellectual attainments and pleasures, will hereafter find his complete happiness in the full satisfaction of his intellectual longings.

But the man who has advanced beyond these and, having realized that his real self is spiritual (akin to God Himself), has found his chief pleasures on earth in the purification of this spiritual nature, and the freeing of it from the trammels and fetters of this passing world and all its weaknesses and evils, and has thereby attained to at least a partial understanding of spiritual realities, will hereafter find his true and full happiness in the world of spiritual attainments, whereby he approaches the Deity, and becomes like him.¹

Such is a short and imperfect statement of Al-Ghazálí's doctrine of happiness. Now, according to Al-Ghazálí, the means whereby a man can attain to this spiritual happiness, is twofold. There are, two paths which lead to true spiritual knowledge—that knowledge of spiritual realities which may be described as experience of them. One of these is study; the other is the path of practice. Some may reach the goal by the one and some by the other. The former path is, according to Al-Ghazálí, the harder and the longer; and few among men are so gifted with intellectual attainments as to be able to traverse it without falling into one or other of the many pitfalls by

¹ See *Mizán*, p. 17

which it is beset. Indeed, for most men it leads only to doubt and unbelief.

The other path, that followed by the Şúfis, is, he states, the easier for most men; for it does not depend on intellectual capacities and mental abilities. In itself, it is true, it is also a path of difficulty, and is likewise beset by many a pitfall; yet of the two it is the easier, and therefore the more suitable for most men.¹

We have already said that the highest joy and pleasure of which man, who is a spiritual being, is capable, lies in the realization of spiritual truth, or, as Al-Ghazálí puts it, 'the knowing of spiritual realities'; and the highest and ultimate goal of this knowledge is God Himself. Further, the greater and deeper a man's knowledge of God, the greater and deeper is his happiness.

To understand what Al-Ghazálí means by this, we must consider a little more in detail his theory of knowledge, and his conception of existence. Knowledge is various. It may be divided into two main divisions; that which depends ultimately on revelation (Shar'í knowledge), and that which depends on reason ('Aqlí knowledge). Yet the two are not really in themselves distinct; for he adds, 'Most 'Shar'í knowledge is 'Aqlí to him who knows it, and most 'Aqlí knowledge is Shar'í to him who understands it.'²

It is not necessary for us to consider the divisions and subdivisions of the former; but it is to be noted that even in the matter of Shar'í knowledge, reason comes into

¹ *Mizán*, p. 49.

² *Risálatu'l-Laduníyya*, p. 15.

play ; for some of the truths of this department of knowledge, are inferences or deductions from the fundamental truths which have been received by divine revelation, that is, from the verbal statements of the Qur'án, while others are the outcome of analogical reasoning based on similarly established beliefs and convictions. ¹

Under the second division ('Aqlí knowledge), we find Mathematics, Astronomy, Logic, Natural Sciences, and Speculative Knowledge. One of the sub-divisions of this last is Speculative Theology.

Now the knowledge of the Şúfis is not solely either Shar'í or 'Aqlí ; it is a compound knowledge, for it depends partly on revealed truth, and partly on speculation.

For the individual the two sources of knowledge are human teaching, and Divine teaching. ² This latter is of two grades or degrees ; Inspiration (wahy) and Enlightenment (ilhám). Through inspiration, God taught the prophets ; but after Muḥammad the door of inspiration was closed. Enlightenment, however, which is the means whereby God teaches the saints (al-awliyá') persists. In one passage Al-Ghazálí defines this enlightenment (ilhám) as the awakening of the human soul by the Universal Soul in proportion to the purity and degree of receptivity and preparedness of the former.

Now, every man can know spiritual truth ³ but every one cannot know it in the same degree : because all have

¹ *Risálatu'l-Laduniyya*, Chapter III.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 23-6, 28.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

not arrived at the same degree of purity or receptivity, or preparedness. Every man is born 'alá fitratın', which may be translated 'with right religious feelings and disposition', and therefore has potentially the power of knowing, because of the original purity and the original attributes of the soul. But the souls of all men are more or less sick through evil.

We speak of a man's knowing; but it is the soul which knows. Indeed, knowledge is the one thing which the soul desires for itself; all else that the soul seeks or desires, it seeks or desires for the sake of the body with which it is associated in this present life, or, as Al-Ghazálí would rather put it, in this present visible world, but from which death releases it.

But after all, we must still ask the question: What is knowledge? To answer this question, Al-Ghazálí falls back on figure and metaphor. The soul is like a tablet on which things are written. For the purified soul which has separated itself from all evil, and turned away from the world and all its passing desires, looks towards its Maker and Creator alone; and God, in his providence approaches such a soul completely and gives it a divine look, and takes a pen and engraves on it all His various knowledges, and the Universal Reason becomes the teacher, and the sanctified¹ soul becomes the taught, and all knowledge arises (yaḥsulu linnafsi), and there is engraved on it the picture of everything without learning and without thought.

¹ i.e. separated from the world.

A more favourite figure with Al-Ghazálí, however, is that of the mirror. The human soul is a mirror: it reflects the realities of the spiritual world. On account of its imperfections and on account of the spots and blemishes which mar its originally bright surface, it reflects these imperfectly, or even in a distorted fashion.

Knowledge is the image of these spiritual realities which the soul reflects. And the highest knowledge of the soul, and that which alone causes it true joy, is the reflection of God Himself.

What prevents men from knowing God, is not that God is far away or that He hides Himself; but that the mirrors which ought to reflect Him, is for some one of many reasons unable to give a correct image of Him.¹

But what of this world of realities which the soul reflects more or less clearly? There exist, according to Al-Ghazálí, two worlds, the seen and the unseen.² Speaking generally, the seen is symbolical of the unseen. All that is apprehended by the senses and the intellect is but a type, as it were, of the unseen—a parabolic representation of something which is more truly deserving of the name of 'real', the *haqíqa*, the true being.³ These types do not necessarily resemble the unseen reality in form or shape or even nature; but they stand to the unseen reality in form or shape or even nature; but they stand to the unseen reality as illustrations, and have in themselves

¹ *Jawáhir*, p. 14. *Mizán*, p. 43.

² Of the other three-fold division into '*álam al-mulk*', '*álam al-jabarút*' and '*álam al-malakút*', it is not necessary here it speak.

³ *Al-Jaháwir*, p. 35.

such powers and attributes and qualities and modes of action, that, in a certain sense, they represent it.

The Qur'án, so Al-Ghazálí tells us, is full of such symbols, and uses throughout symbolic and figurative language to represent spiritual truth. Such language is employed because in no other way could man understand the divine relations; and he admits that at times figurative language is employed even with the object of hiding, as through a veil, the unseen, which most men could not understand were it revealed, and concerning which many would but argue and contradict, had any further revelation of the truth been given.¹

Man lives as in a dream. Death is the awakening.² As one interprets one's dream on awaking, and thus learns the reality of the things which were typified by it, so when man awakes at death, he will understand the true reality of those things which here on earth he knows only through type and symbol. So long as one remains here on earth, bound by the trammels of the body and the animal life, and animal desires which form part of his composite nature, one can never attain to a full or uninterrupted knowledge of the divine realities.

Now, all knowledge of spiritual truth comes from God. Some time He imparts it directly—sometimes indirectly. With regard to its attainment man stands in one of three grades. There is first potential knowledge. As the infant has the capacity to learn to write, for instance, but cannot yet write, so man, at the outset, has the capacity to know spiritual truth. Following this, there comes the

¹ *Jawáhir*, pp. 40, 41.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36-8

grade in which a boy has knowledge of the letters and can form them. He can write, but his knowledge is yet imperfect. It has not attained its maximum. So it may be with man in regard to the truths of the spiritual world. Finally there comes the grade of the skilled clerk, which may be compared with the position of the man who is well conversant with spiritual realities. Yet even here in this last grade, there are degrees or stages, and according to the degree or stage reached there are to be distinguished the prophets, the saints, the wise, and the learned. The highest stage of these is that of the prophet who knows by divine inspiration, without learning or acquiring knowledge.

This knowledge of spiritualities brings one near to God. Now, the only way to receive this knowledge—for it comes as a gift from God, and is not strictly speaking *acquired*—is to be prepared to receive it by purifying the spirit or soul as a mirror must be cleansed and polished if it is to reflect aright the image of what is before it. Man's soul must be clean: and then the good things of God will flow out on it and be reflected in it. It is, therefore, the outflowing of the grace of God on the human soul which is the ultimate desire of that soul.

This brings us to speak of the passage in the *Mishkát* in which Al-Ghazálí, after interpreting the verse in the Qur'án which speaks of God as the light of the Heavens and the Earth,¹ expounds the tradition concerning the seventy (thousand) veils which hide the face of God from man.

¹ Súratu'n-Núr xxiv. 35.

He divides men into three main classes according to the nature of these veils. It is to be noted that in this classification Al-Ghazálí is not judging men by the standard of their character. In the *Iljám*¹ he has made it clear that in his opinion, for he was always an orthodox Muslim, the one great sin -that which not only cuts a man off from having any hope of experiencing the divine forgiveness, but also prevents him from having a true knowledge of God, is misconception of theological doctrine. All other sins are but minor matters compared with this, the sin of shirk. And it is with this thought in mind that Al-Ghazálí has drawn up his famous classification of men which is found in the *Mishkát*.²

1. The first class includes all those who are veiled by *pure darkness*: in it we find (1) Professed Atheists, who look out upon the world and regard it as all in all; they deny that there is any God and any life to come. (2) The practical Atheists, who are so concerned with the present life that they never truly realize that there is anything more, and who thus, by their life and deeds, though not in word, deny the existence of God and the life hereafter. In this second subdivision, Al-Ghazálí places Sensualists, Worshippers of Power and Brute Force, Mammon-Worshippers, and Worshippers of Fame and Glory.³

All in this first class, whether belonging to one subdivision or the other, are veiled by pure darkness, because they have no conception of the existence of a spiritual

¹ p. 33.

² See further Chapter 5.

³ The word *worshipper* in the foregoing is to be taken wholly figuratively.

world at all. No ray of spiritual light has reached them. Many of them (it must be of the second subdivision) may indeed be professing Muslims, who say, 'There is no god but God,' but who make such a profession from false motives and incentives, such as fear of the authorities, or pressure of public opinion, or even from mere fanatical adherence to the faith of their fathers. It is most interesting and instructive to note that Al-Ghazālī here admits that outward profession of Islām without inward spiritual knowledge puts one no higher than this first class of those who are veiled by pure darkness.

2. The second class are those who are veiled by light and darkness mixed. In this class are included all who have some conception of the existence of God and of a spiritual world, however imperfect or mistaken this conception may be, as well as all those who, while they have accepted the revelation of the Qur'ān, have for various reasons gone astray in their theology. Thus we find in the first division of this class all who have taken as the object of their worship some *Object of sense*, and they may be subdivided into worshippers of inanimate objects of beauty (image worshippers, for instance), worshippers of animate objects of beauty, be they human beings, animals, or trees, Fire worshippers, Star and Planet worshippers, Sun worshippers, and Light worshippers, among whom are to be included the Dualists.

The second division of this class includes all who are veiled by light mixed with darkness arising from *Imagination*. Al-Ghazālī evidently intends by such, all who, because they cannot conceive or imagine anything wholly

different from the outward forms and shapes of material objects, or anything wholly dissociated from the circumstances and relations and accidents with which material objects are always associated, have therefore held views of the Deity which are tinged with these preconceptions. Here we find (a) The Anthropomorphists (Al-Mujassima) and (b) the various sects of the Karramiyya or those who deny all accidents to the Deity except 'jihāt fawq' (upward direction).

All these are unable to conceive a Deity whom they cannot present to their imagination. He must have some form or shape, or at least have some relation which can be defined only in terms of form or shape or direction. Their conception of God cannot therefore be truly spiritual. They are misled by their imagination.

The third division of this class includes those who, while they accept the revelation of the Qur'ān and its teachings, fall into error through some false inference, or deduction of the *Intellect*. Here come in all those who, not being able to understand that the attributes of God may be described by words which cannot be taken (when employed in speaking of the Deity) in the exact sense in which they are used when speaking of man, fall into the error of limiting the attributes of God by the corresponding attributes of man.

3. The third class are those who are veiled by light alone. This class includes those who have freed themselves from all anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity and have understood aright the *spirituality* of God, and who have understood further that in describing or

defining the attributes of the Deity we employ words such as *speech, will, power*, etc., in a different sense from that which the words have when used to describe the attributes and powers of human nature, but who from the very glory of the light itself are unable to comprehend the true relation of the First Cause to the world which He has created.

The first division of this class includes those who hold that God directly moves the heavens (spheres) and directs them.

The second division includes those who have advanced beyond this, and have recognized that the spheres being many, the One God cannot be the mover of all; for this would be to deny His Unity in action. They, therefore, understand that each sphere must have its own mover (or Angel); and that there is an outer sphere containing all the others, and that God is the mover of this outer sphere alone.

The third division includes those who realize that the direct moving of any body must be an act of service and obedience and worship of the Lord of all the worlds. They, therefore, hold that it is an Angel who moves even the outer sphere, and that he does this at the command of God (Al-Muṭa'). God is therefore the mover of all, not directly, but by way of command. This supreme angel stands to God in the relation in which the moon stands to the sun.

All these are veiled by pure light alone.

4. A fourth class, Al-Wásilun (those who attain) are alone unveiled. It has been revealed to them, in addition

to all the foregoing, that to the obeyed one (Al-Muṭaʿ) there has been attributed even by those in the third division of the preceding third class something irreconcilable with absolute Unity and complete perfection. Al-Ghazálí most tantalizingly adds that the explanation of how their position involves this, is a secret mystery which cannot be divulged in this book. Perhaps the difficulty in the mind of Al-Ghazálí which led him to deny that the Muṭaʿ could be the ultimate First Cause (Al-Wujúd al-Haqq—Alláh) lay in the thought that, if so, then the word of command could not be eternal, but must be *ḥadīth*; for it is given to a created being, and must thus take place in time, after the creation of the mover of the outer sphere. It is not difficult to see how this question could not be appropriately discussed in a book such as the *Mishkát*; and perhaps Al-Ghazálí had no answer to give. (A command presupposes some one commanded.) They, therefore, recognize that this Muṭaʿ is not God, but stands in a relation to God (Al-Wujúd al-Haqq) similar to that of the sun to Absolute Light or of the glowing coal to the Pure Essential Fire.

The Wásilun, therefore, turn away from the mover of the outer sphere, and from him who commands it to be moved (al-Muṭaʿ) and reach out to a Being who transcends all that is to be apprehended by the perception or by the conception of those who look for him (the speculative theologians); for they have found Him to be transcendent, separated from all the Beings and the Spheres and all else that has been previously described.

God, then, is not the immediate Agent, either in creation, or in the providential government and direction of the universe. He does not even give the word of command whereby the world is created and ruled. What He is and how He acts, man cannot know ; but that He is and that He acts, man can realize through experience. Had Al-Ghazálí known anything of electric phenomena, he would most probably have used the illustration of our ignorance of what electricity is while we perceive electric phenomena, to throw some feeble light on what he conceived the relation of God to be towards the universe which He created. It seems strange that Al-Ghazálí's keen mind did not lead him to see that the posting of the spheres and the angels who move them, was really a limiting of the power and nature of God, through 'false analogies of the reason' ; and that reason, apart from the analogies drawn from human governments and human systems of administration, does not demand these.

It is surprising that it did not occur to him that God's methods of action and government are not to be conditioned by those of mankind ; but that the divine methods of action and causation must be far surpassing anything that man can comprehend, and must not be limited by conceiving them as in any way similar to those actions of human beings which are expressed by the only words we can employ to define or describe the corresponding actions of God. It is difficult to understand why he did not see this with regard to the acts of God, when he saw it with regard to the attributes.

Apparently he never saw that to use these words in describing the actions of the Deity and His relations to the world was not necessarily to do anything contrary to the idea of the true Unity.

It would have been more reasonable of him to assert the creatorship of God, and the divine Government and direction of the world, as orthodox Islám does, and to add, 'the manner of it is unknown, and to ask questions about it is innovation (al kaifa majhúl wa's-su'ál 'anhu bid'a).'

It was no intellectual necessity but the so-called scientific theories of the times which led Al-Ghazálí to accept the complex system of the spheres. He apparently accepted these as almost self-evidently true, and therefore any attempt at explanation of such matters by mere speculative theology necessitated, to his mind, the whole series of spheres with their angels and First Cause, and thus led to the removal and banishment of God from the whole world-scheme.

It is only, according to Al-Ghazálí, when this absolute transcendence of God is realized that the true spirituality of the Deity is conserved.

Thus, it is not enough to remove from the mirror of the soul all its blemishes and imperfections. However pure and clean the soul of man may become, a man cannot attain to a true realization of God so long as he endeavours to *conceive* what the nature of God is; for in such a case he will still be held down by the bonds and fetters of *imagination*, which is quite unable to free itself from the ideas associated with form and shape and space

and the various relations which these imply. Imagination cannot reach God ; nay, it hides God.

Nor can the *Intellect* grasp Him ; and every attempt to say What or Who God is in His nature and Being, must be avoided : for to employ words to describe or define Him, however carefully one may explain the sense in which they are used, only leads to misconception, for they necessarily retain something of the meaning which they have when they are used to denote human powers and human attributes, seeing that from their very essence, being human speech, they describe the relations and powers of embodied men.

Even the desire of spiritualities in preference to the vanities of this world must be avoided. To bring out this point, Al-Ghazálí employs the illustration of the position of the lover in the presence of his beloved. The lover who, in the presence of the object of his affection, compares his experiences with the lesser joys and pleasures of life, is not for the moment whole-hearted in his devotion. The true lover, when in the presence of his beloved, knows not aught else. His whole being is absorbed by the object of his affection ; and, for the moment, naught else exists for him. His every thought, and feeling, and emotion must be so absorbed by the beloved that he is indifferent -unconscious indeed -whether aught else exists. He must even lose consciousness of his very joy ; lose himself, in fact in his beloved. Similarly, the seeker after God must lose himself in God ; he must not even be conscious of the greatness of his desire after God, for that would mean

that he is comparing this desire with other desires and realizing that this is greater than these.¹ He must be solely receptive, not desirous; and then God Himself will do all, and the seeker will experience—'taste' is Al-Ghazálí's word—the blessedness of beholding God, a blessedness which cannot be described, for no words or figure of speech can truly express it; it is a mystic union of spirit with Spirit which, however, according to Al-Ghazálí, must not be described as 'oneness'. The seeker loses, as it were, his consciousness of self as apart from God, yet never comes to that state which some falsely or mistakenly claim to have reached and which they describe as finding consciousness in God. The seeker who thus attains, 'tastes and sees that God is good,' yet knows not what he tastes and sees—knows not even while he tastes and sees, that it is he who enjoys this experience. Thus, all sense of a personal God is lost.

Through such experiences, fleeting and intermittent here on earth, the soul, according to Al-Ghazálí, is prepared for the absolute and ultimate joy of the continuous and unending experience which is spoken of as beholding the Face of God.

Islám shows a man how to walk with acceptance before God here on earth; Šúfiism teaches him how to enjoy God here and hereafter.

¹ See also *Ihya'*, 4. pp. 137-8.

CHAPTER V

AL-GHAZÁLÍ AS THINKER AND EXPOSITOR

AFTER AL-GHAZÁLÍ had once come to the conclusion that human reason is reliable, and that, when it is enlightened by God, it is capable of judging between what is true and what is false in the sphere of religious truth, he set it up as the standard whereby all knowledge which is based either on sense-perception or on apprehension through intellectual processes must be judged. Nothing is to be accepted which is contrary to reason. There are spheres of truth which lie wholly outside the domain of reason ; truth in these spheres may be experienced or 'tasted' by man's soul ; such truths are apprehended directly and not through the reason, yet even such truths, so far as they can be explained and put into language, must be judged also by reason, for they cannot be contradictory to its necessary premises.

There are thus two kinds of knowledge—intellectual, and experimental—and beyond these there are experiences which can hardly be classed as knowledge at all.

Now all interpretation of the Qur'án comes under the category of intellectual knowledge and must, therefore, be absolutely subject to the judgement of the reason. So certain is this that any interpretation which appears to contradict reason is to be doubted, and if its contradiction to reason be established, it is to be forthwith rejected

Starting from such a premise, Al-Ghazálí was naturally a logical thinker and interpreter. When speaking of that which he *knows* he never ventures beyond the conclusion which he can syllogistically draw from his premises. But we must remember that, in his judgement of what is reasonable and what unreasonable, he was wholly dependent on the standard of his times. The environment in which he lived, and the so-called scientific knowledge of his day formed that standard. He accepted, for instance, the whole system of superstition bound up with magic and sorcery and the use of charms and talismans as reasonable, and he did this without a qualm, never apparently even suspecting that it might be challenged as unreasonable. In the *Munqidh*, for example, he employs the supposed magical virtue which was attributed in his day to the Badúh,¹ as an illustration to silence the objections of those who suggested that there could be no real efficacy in the number of genuflections, prostrations, and repetition of words in the orthodox prayer ritual.

In his *Hikmatu'l-Makhlúqât*, to take but another instance, much of his argument is valueless in our days, because it rests on contemporary belief and knowledge which we now know to be false or ill-founded.

Thus, while Al-Ghazálí was a logical thinker, it is impossible to admit that all his conclusions are true;

¹ The Badúh is a square divided into nine smaller squares in which were written the letters of the alphabet which represent in numerical value the nine digits: these were arranged so that they added up the number fifteen, whether taken horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, after the manner of what is well known as 'the fifteen puzzle'.

for many of the premises from which he argues, though admitted in his day, can no longer be conceded. His whole argument founded on the acceptance of the theory of the 'spheres', as developed in the *Mishkāt*, falls to the ground with the fall of that grotesque system of the universe with which it was bound up.

Similarly when he maintains, as he does in the *Iqtisād*,¹ that it was by the proof of reason that he came to know that Muḥammad was indeed true in what he relates, we are again forced to object that he found reasonable much that we find unreasonable, for he started from premises which we cannot admit. It is to be noted, of course, that he did not claim that human reason alone was able to judge whether Muḥammad was true or not, but that human reason enlightened by divine light could do so. 'I believe in the truth of Muḥammad (May God bless and preserve him) and in the truth of Moses (on whom be peace) not alone because of the splitting of the moon, or the turning of the rod into a serpent . . . but because I learned the Balances (Syllogisms) from the Qur'ān, and weighed all the teachings regarding the divine nature and attributes, and also the condition of the resurrection, and the torment of the tomb, and the torment of the wicked, and the reward of the obedient, as I have mentioned in the *Jawāhiru'l-Qur'ān*, and I found that they all agreed with what is in the Qur'ān and what is in the traditions (*akhbār*), and so I became certain that Muḥammad is true, and that the Qur'ān is the truth . . . and

¹ p. 2.

my knowledge of the truth of the prophet (May God bless and preserve him) is 'necessary' (ḍarúriyya) as your knowledge is when you see a man discussing any question of *fiqh*, and do it well, and produce a true and clear jurisprudence. For you do not doubt that he is a *faqīh*. And your certainty with regard to him is clearer than it would have been were if the result of seeing him change a thousand rods into serpents.¹

Now in this judgement Al-Ghazálí depended not on pure reason, nor even on reason enlightened by God, but on the whole intellectual atmosphere engendered by Islám itself, and on the scientific knowledge of his day. Had he been able to judge Muḥammad and the Qur'án in independence of his preconceptions and of so-called scientific knowledge, he would have found that there were many things of which Muḥammad had apparently a poor grasp, and that much that is contained in the Qur'án is contrary to fact. The stories taken from the Old Testament, for example, are misrepresented and mistold; the teaching of the Prophet with regard to marriage and divorce are far from satisfactory; the statements with regard to the torment of the grave are unacceptable fables.

Let us, however, turn now to look at Al-Ghazálí's methods of argument.

Al-Ghazálí always wrote with a purpose, and this purpose is not merely or even principally that his hearers or readers may have knowledge. Mere knowledge is useless. The object with which he wrote, he

¹ Qustás, pp. 82-4.

tells us himself, was to quicken spiritual life. He desired to move not so much men's minds as men's wills—to help towards the establishment of a real and vital religion. With this object one cannot but sympathize, and one cannot but admire the incessant labours with which he sought to attain his purpose.

At present, however, we desire to consider briefly the method by which he attempted to accomplish the great task he had undertaken. He maintains that in preaching and writing for the general public you must argue from the circumstances and standpoint of the reader or hearer; and in controversy from the beliefs of your opponent, though you may not personally stand where your audience stands, or hold the beliefs which your opponent regards as axiomatic. In other words, one must appeal to men—to their failings and their feelings; the object in view being to influence them rather than to demonstrate certain truths,¹ if you can influence them by appearing to admit the truth of their own beliefs, any argument based on these beliefs, though they may be contrary to your own, is to be employed. It is interesting to remember here what Al-Ghazálí says of the method by which Muḥammad endeavoured to bring the Arab tribes to accept his teaching and himself as their prophet. Professor Macdonald has said that Muḥammad was largely an opportunist. This is only another way of stating the fact that he too endeavoured to move men's wills rather than to inculcate definite truths. And Al-Ghazálí in his writings follows

¹ See *Risálatu'l-wa'dh*.

what he believed had been the practice of the prophet. In very much of his argument he is not so anxious that you should have full knowledge as that the knowledge you have should lead you to act as he believes you ought to act.

This being so, we are sometimes in a quandary to know whether the premises from which Al-Ghazálí argues are to be taken as being his own standpoint, or merely that of his audience. We cannot, that is, be absolutely certain that Al-Ghazálí is expressing his own views. In saying this we do not intend to suggest that he was hypocritical in what he said ; for the conclusion towards which he argued and which he desired his audience to reach was his own, but we cannot always feel sure that he reached this conclusion by the same path as that by which he sought to lead his hearers.

One troublesome result of this method of argument is that he often makes general statements which were in accordance with the popular conceptions of the day, but which he would undoubtedly have modified somewhat by defining or restricting or guarding the terms he employed if he had been expressing definitely and exactly his own personal convictions and opinion. This practise of making general statements which were in accordance with orthodox and popular belief led him sometimes into apparent inconsistencies.

As an illustration of this let us look at what he says on the subject of whether Christians are káfirs (unbelievers). In the second section of the *Faysal*, he most clearly and definitely states that Christians are káfirs, because they

deny the claim of Muḥammad to be a prophet, and to avoid any ambiguity as to what is meant by the expression káfir, and the consequences, as he understands them, of being a káfir, he adds, 'that means that they remain for ever in the fire.' But when we come to the eleventh section of the book we find him saying that he holds that many Christians will attain to paradise. They may not absolutely escape the fires of hell, but they will not remain there for ever. In this latter section of the book, he explains his position by stating that what he means is that many of the Christians are not really deniers of the claims of Muḥammad because they have never heard of him. These cannot, therefore, have rejected him. Others of them have never had Muḥammad's claims put properly before them, but have only heard from their youth up that Muḥammad was a false prophet and impostor; these too, therefore, cannot be regarded as having had the claims of Muḥammad set before them. They do not belong to the class of the Mukallafín (those who are responsible) and seeing that they have not in any true sense rejected Muḥammad and Islám, they cannot be called káfirs. Thus the apparently divergent statements are to be explained.

In the *Mishkát*, too, we find Al-Ghazálí including Christians among the light-and-darkness-veiled class of mankind. It is probable that the same explanation may here again relieve him of the charge of real inconsistency.

Similarly, when in the *Munjidh* Al-Ghazálí speaks of God as being the Maker and Orderer of the world, we should perhaps understand that he was employing the

words simply against the position of all who held that the world was eternal or was an emanation or selfmanifestation of Alláh ; while in the *Mishkát* he was endeavouring to explain from the point of view of speculative theology the relation of Alláh to the world which He had created. Somewhere ¹ Al-Ghazálí employs the figure of the relation of the Sultán to his vizier to illustrate the relation of Alláh to the world. The vizier it is who actually gives orders ; the Sultán only expresses his will to the vizier ; yet we can truly say that the Sultán orders, because the vizier in giving orders is simply acting for the Sultán. Thus we may say God orders and yet when we come to express the truth more definitely and exactly, we must say (according to Al-Ghazálí) that Alláh does not actually order, but merely expresses His will in some way (which Al-Ghazálí does not attempt to explain) to the 'One who orders' the spheres to be moved. So thus again, the inconsistency is seen to be more apparent than real ; it arises through the making of a general statement in the language of popular orthodox Islám without a careful definition and guarding of the terms employed.

At other times an apparent inconsistency occurs through the almost fond love Al-Ghazálí has for the use of figures and illustrations. Indeed, he is seldom satisfied with one illustration. Very much of what he says is expressed in figurative language, and one must keep this in mind and not endeavour to press the figures too far. He held that there are ideas and experiences which human speech is incapable of expressing in exact terms, and that these

¹ I have lost the reference and cannot again find it.

can be expressed or rather suggested only by symbolical pictures, and he was himself aware that misunderstanding must arise if these word pictures are taken as exact statements.

Further, he admits that in the Qur'án figurative language is, at times, employed to conceal rather than to reveal, and one cannot but suspect that sometimes Al-Ghazálí himself follows what he believes to have been the practice of the prophet, and uses illustrations with the object of avoiding a clear-cut and definite statement which might arouse opposition and contention. By the use of the illustration he was able, when he so desired it, to make an appeal to the imagination and feelings of his audience, and yet escape making a definite statement. He hid behind the vague picture of his figurative language.

In this connexion we must also consider Al-Ghazálí's position with regard to freedom of thought and investigation. We have already seen that, on the whole, his labours made for freedom, but that there was at the same time no small vein of intolerance running through his theological system. This inconsistency is a much more serious matter than the mere verbal contradictions or apparent contradictions arising from want of exactness or clearness in the use of terms, such as those of which we have been speaking.

It will be remembered that, as soon as Al-Ghazálí had found intellectual assurance through faith in the truth of Muḥammad and the authority of the Qur'án, he proposed to investigate the doctrines and teachings of the faith in the light of reason, with the object of establishing them

on what, in his opinion, was a more sure and certain foundation than that on which they had previously rested.

His fight with the scholastic theologians was bitter and fierce. He claimed that they had no ground for maintaining that they were the sole repositories of the faith and the only guardians of any reliable demonstration of its reasonableness and truth. He denied that the mere assertion of the theologians that such and such a statement was the truth handed down from the fathers, and that such and such a demonstration had satisfied them, could in any way be regarded as satisfactorily establishing the faith. Moreover, he claimed that every investigator must be free to demonstrate the truth in his own way and only by what appeared to him to be the best method of establishing it : and this demonstration, when shown to be in accordance with reason, placed the faith on a surer foundation than any that could be laid by the mere assertion that such was the faith of the fathers.

The establishment of this position, on which he took his stand, may be said to be one of the main works he accomplished for Islám.

But when we come to investigate his opinions and teachings we find that the application of this principle was limited. He claimed freedom for himself and for others whom he considered as but slightly his inferiors in learning and intellectual capacity, but it was for this class alone that he claimed freedom.

The private believer or the private investigator had no right to put forward any similar claim. Any one who

endeavoured to investigate the same truths independently, or who refused to be bound by the consensus of opinion he not merely regarded with suspicion, but opposed with intolerance. They were 'contentious', and against the contentious Alláh had already whetted the sword. Not merely those who professed Islám but conducted themselves in such a way as to bring discredit on it by their personal behaviour and action were to be coerced, but also those who, refusing to accept what was by common consensus the true faith, appeared unreasonable and insisted on investigation on independent lines must be compelled to be silent by the civil authorities, or, if necessary, be actually put to death. The theologians alone were to be free; the common people were to be made to conform. On this subject Al-Ghazálí is most definite and clear in his statement.¹

In taking up this position. Al-Ghazálí was simply manifesting the deep effects which the whole intellectual atmosphere of Islám had produced upon him. The very air he breathed was laden with the poison of intolerance; and we must recollect that he accepted the truth of Islám 'by faith', and could therefore never acknowledge that the faith as handed down from the founder through the fathers was a fit subject of investigation or criticism. It is because of this blind acceptance on his part of the orthodox tenets of the faith that we have said in a former chapter that the work of Al-Ghazálí never has led and never can lead to true liberty and advancement.

We must now turn to consider Al-Ghazálí as a com

¹ See *Iḥyá'u'l-'Awamín*, p. 37 ff.

mentator. There is one aspect of his speculative theology which dominates wholly his attitude towards the question of the proper method of interpretation. It is his conception of *existence*. It will be recollected that we have already shown how Al-Ghazálí held that there are two worlds—not the present and the future, but the seen and the unseen; for both are ever present, and it is only man's physical conditions that prevent him from living constantly and continuously in the unseen.

Of these two worlds, it is the seen that is, in truth, the unreal; for it is merely typical of the unseen. By this, of course, is not meant that the seen has no real existence, but only that it is not enduring and permanent. It is fleeting and evanescent; while the unseen is enduring and therefore the real—not enduring in itself in the sense that it is eternal, but enduring in the sense that it continues as long as God wills; while of the seen world God has already willed the passing away.

Now God has so created everything in the seen world that it is typical of something in the unseen. Nay, it may be typical of more than one reality.¹ Thus, when we come to the matter of the interpretation of the Qur'án, we find Al-Ghazálí making full use of this conception of the existence of things. In the *Faysal* he develops his theory of the reality of things in his discussion on the subject of *belief* and *unbelief*.

Belief consists in the confession or acknowledgement that all that the Prophet said existed does exist; and unbelief lies in affirming that anything which he said

¹ See *Jawáhir*, p. 35 ff.

existed does not exist. But there are five ways or modes of existence ; and it is because of want of attention to these five modes of existence that men have come to disagree so much and to charge one another with unbelief. Al-Ghazálí maintains that all who accept what the Prophet said in any one of these modes of existence is not to be regarded as denying the same. He may be mistaken in his understanding of what the Prophet meant, but he is not a *káfir*. Al-Ghazálí then goes on to explain and exemplify each of these modes of accepting the statements of the prophet.

1. There is first *real existence* which does not depend in any way on the object being seen or perceived. The senses and the reason may indeed picture the object which exists, and this may be called *knowing* or *perceiving* it, but the existence of the object does not depend on the senses or the reason, for it exists independently of them. Most of mankind, says Al-Ghazálí, attain no further than a knowledge of this mode of existence.

2. Beyond this real existence, there is a further existence which is connected with and dependent on the *senses*. This existence is the representation which is formed in the eye, for example, of the object seen, and does not exist apart from the seeing eye. It is the peculiar possession of the senses. For instance, a sleeper or a sick man may see things which have no outward existence or reality. Thus the prophets and saints during their waking moments and while in complete health have beautiful pictures of spiritual relations, and by means of these visions they receive revelations of unseen things.

Such, for instance, says Al-Ghazálí, was the vision which the Virgin Mary saw : and similarly Muḥammad on many occasions saw Gabriel. So too, adds Al-Ghazálí, it is possible to see in sleep the Prophet himself, for he said, 'He who sees me in sleep, truly sees me.' Yet to say that the vision of the Prophet is possible does not imply that the Prophet in person leaves Madína for the place in which the sleeper happens to be living.

3. The third mode of existence is that of *imagination*, by which Al-Ghazálí means a mental reconstruction of something which has actually been seen. This picture exists in the brain, not in the senses, in contradiction to that form or mode of existence spoken of in the preceding paragraph. Here, the eye does not really see at all : it is the mind which reconstructs the picture which the eye has primarily seen.

4. The next mode of existence is that connected with the *reason*, and by this mode Al-Ghazálí refers to the meaning which is intended by the use of a symbol or word. For instance, when we speak of *the hand* we sometimes mean not the actual hand, but something symbolized by the hand such as power, ability, authority, without conjuring up the picture of the actual hand, or seeing it even in imagination. Thus, we say that power, force, ability, authority, is the *intellectual* hand, and similarly we may speak of the *pen*, meaning that whereby knowledge is engraved, without conjuring up in our minds the picture of a reed.

5. Finally, we come to the fifth and last mode of existence—*symbolic* existence. The difference between this

and the fourth mode is that here the thing itself does not exist at all actually or even pictorially. It is neither outside the senses nor in the senses, neither in the brain as an imaginary picture, nor in the intellect as a meaning or conception ; but there exists something else which resembles it in some one or other of its qualities, so that you understand it if the symbol is mentioned in explaining or interpreting a matter. Examples of this last mode of existence may be seen in the interpretation of those passages which speak of the anger, the joy, the patience of God, or in similar expressions describing the divine action and feelings. In the *Madnûnu's-Saghîr*¹ Al-Ghazálí tells us that that which causes similar effects to those which are caused by joy or anger or patience in man are spoken of as the joy or anger or patience of God, while they are not really similar to these human passions or feelings.

In his exposition of the Qur'ân and of the sayings of the Prophet, Al-Ghazálí follows the preceding scheme. But it is to be noted that he inserts a caveat, that one must not pass from one grade of existence to another in his search for a fitting interpretation without due cause, that is, unless it is absolutely necessary. A thing which may exist in reality must not be interpreted as belonging to one or another of the other modes of existence, and on no account must the interpreter pass from one mode to a lower in search of what appears to him to be a reasonable interpretation until he has proved to his complete satisfaction that the statement cannot be true on any of the higher planes of existence.

¹ p. 51 f.

The whole scheme is in many ways most unsatisfactory, and gives rise to many and great difficulties. It will be clear to any intelligent thinker that the object of the scheme is not to arrive at the original meaning of the teachings of the Qur'án, but to find some way of explaining statements which are crude and unacceptable to an enlightened mind. It is undoubtedly true that Al-Ghazálí often interprets the words of the Qur'án in such a way that they are made to mean something far different from what they conveyed to the minds of those who first heard the words.

In fact, Al-Ghazálí's method of interpretation and exposition drives a way roughshod through the words of the Qur'án quite irrespective of what Muḥammad may have meant, and must have appeared to many to be leading to its absolute destruction as a reliable source of faith. He fails to distinguish between the teaching of Muḥammad to the men of his day, and the meaning which the words may be twisted to express. 'Things are not what they seem' may be taken as the keynote or motto of Al-Ghazálí's system of interpretation.

Another evidence that Al-Ghazálí never succeeded in freeing himself from the influences of his upbringing and environment is to be found in the fact that while he professed to believe in Jesus as a prophet, and referred frequently to the Gospels and the sayings of Jesus, he apparently never sought to understand the true doctrines of Christianity. There are so many references in his writings to the sayings and deeds of Jesus that one is almost inclined to believe that he must have had

intercourse with Christians during his wanderings in Syria.¹

Al-Ghazálí was in many ways a thorough investigator and a fearless thinker, and it casts considerable light on the limits beyond which he could not go, to find that apparently he did not investigate the teachings of Christianity. Here, again, he took refuge in his acceptance of the truth of Islám 'by faith', and into the truth of Christianity he did not carry his researches, though he must have had opportunities of doing so. The point we desire to emphasize is that he professed to speak of Jesus and to quote His sayings yet never investigated for himself the truths which Jesus taught. In the *Munqidh* he speaks most severely of those who attempt to criticize the systems of the philosophers without understanding them, and one cannot but express surprise that he himself ventured to speak of the Christian doctrine of the Deity of Christ when apparently he did not in the least understand it. In the *Mizánu'l-'Amal* he classes the belief of the Christians with regard to the deity of Christ with that of those who maintain that union with God is possible to such a degree that one can say, as did Al-Halláj, 'I am the truth,' 'Peace be on me.' Apparently Al-Ghazálí believed that the Christian teaching was that Jesus, through Súfí practices, attained to union with God. The only conclusion we can come to is that Al-Ghazálí was so bound up by the system which he had

¹ For a review of Al Ghazálí's acquaintance with the life and sayings of Jesus, see *The Moslem World*, April 1917. and *Islám at its Best*, by S. M. Zwemer, D.D.

² p. 30.

accepted 'by faith' that beyond it he did not dare to carry his investigations.

Let us conclude with a word on Al-Ghazálí as an ethical teacher. Of him Tholuck wrote, 'This man, if ever any have deserved the name, was truly a "divine", and he may be justly placed on a level with Origen, so remarkable was he for learning and ingenuity, and gifted with such a rare faculty for the skill and exposition of doctrine. All that is good, noble, and sublime that his great soul had compassed he bestowed on Muḥammadanism, and he adorned the doctrines of the Qur'án with so much piety and learning that, in the form given them by him they seem, in my opinion, worthy the assent of Christians . . . his sincere piety and lofty conscientiousness imparted to all his writings a sacred majesty. He was the first of Muḥammadan divines.'¹

It is probably no exaggeration to say that Al-Ghazálí stands out among Muḥammadan writers as the greatest ethical teacher of his generation, but in the space at our disposal it is impossible to treat as it ought to be treated this side of his character and work. Admitting in a general way the truth of the Tholuck's encomium, it is, however, necessary to state that even in his ethical ideas and teachings Al-Ghazálí did not succeed in freeing himself from the prevailing mode of thought which saw in wrong intellectual conceptions of God and the divine nature sins more damnable than any of the vices to which a man might give way. In the *Iljám*, in connexion with his argument that those who are not by education and

¹ Quoted in *The Alchemy of Happiness, Wisdom of the East Series*, Introduction, p. 14.

training specially qualified to investigate the niceties of theology should leave it alone lest they fall into unbelief, Al-Ghazálí writes: 'And if you ask me what is to be done if a man's heart cannot keep from thinking and investigation, I reply that it is best for him to busy himself with the service of God and prayer and the reading of the Qur'án and *dhikr*. And if he cannot do this, then let him take up the study of some other science which has no relation to this (theology) such as etymology, or grammar, or writing, or medicine, or jurisprudence. And if this be impossible, let him take up some trade or handicraft, even if it be only farming or weaving. And if this be impossible, then let him give himself to some play or pastime: for any of these are better for him than wading into this deep and dangerous sea. Nay, if the common people occupy themselves with the sins of the body it would probably be safer for them than entering into investigation into the knowledge of God (theology). For the end of these is lewdness (*fisq*), but the result of this is unbelief (*shirk*), and God will not pardon the sin of unbelief, though He will pardon anything less than this.'¹

It was the narrow and soulless doctrine of the fathers which Al-Ghazálí had accepted that compelled him to write thus, and it is difficult to believe that such was his own personal opinion. In any case, it was but a counsel of desperation for the few and must not be taken as expressing in any real sense his ethical position. He was better than his creed, and the goal to which he sought to lead men was indeed 'noble and sublime'.

¹ *Ilja'mu'l-'Awámm*, p. 33.

APPENDIX

THE following list includes works by Al-Ghazálí which have been published in Egypt, mostly within the last fifteen years, and which, with perhaps one or two exceptions, are easily obtainable from any bookseller in Cairo.

Ihyá'u-'Ulúmi'd-Dín (The Vitalising of Religion). (The title of this book is usually translated *Revival of the Sciences of Religion*, but the above translation gives a better idea of what Al-Ghazálí meant by the title. His object in writing it was to make religion vital and practical). Four vols. Maymaniyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1322 and A.H. 1334.

The *Ihyá'* is divided into four parts, each containing ten Books. 'The first of the forty is on 'Ilm (Knowledge, Science). The second is on Kalám (Theology). The last is on Al-Mawt wa ma ba'dahu (Eschatology). All the others are experimental, traditional, practical.' (Macdonald in *Encyclopædia of Islám*.)

An Abridgement of the *Ihyá'* entitled *Ma'wá 'idhátu'l-Mu'minin min Ihyá'i'Ulúmi'd-Dín* by the As-Sa'áda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1325.

Kitábu'l-Arba'in [The Book of the forty (sections)]. Kurdistán al-'Ilmíyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

An Abridgement by the author, himself of the *Ihyá'*. It was written as a companion volume to the *Jawáhiru'l-Qur'án*, but has no real connection with it.

Al-Kitábu'l-Wajiz. (The Short Book) two vols. Adáb and Mu'ayyad Press, Cairo, A.H. 1317.

On Fiqh (Canon Law). Apparently an early book.

‘l-Kitáb’l-Mustafá (The Choice Book). Two vols. Government Press, Boulac, A.H. 1322.

A more comprehensive book on Fiqh, written after he began to teach again at Naysabúr.

Mi‘yáru’l-‘Ilm fi Fannu’l-Mantaq (The Standard of Knowledge concerning the Science of Logic). Kurdistan al-‘Ilmíyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1329.

Mihakku’n-Nadhír fi’l-Mantaq (The Touchstone of Judgment in Logic). Al-Adabíyya Press, Cairo, no date.

Maqásidu’l-Falásifa (The Aims of the Philosophers). As-Sa‘áda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1326.

A statement of their teachings on all subjects save the absolutely demonstrable, professes to be a hikáya (Macdonald in *Encyclopædia of Islám*).

Taháfutu’l-Falásifa (The Destruction of the Philosophers). Al-‘Ámira Press, Cairo, A.H. 1321.

Demonstration that they could not by reason prove their system (Macdonald in *Encyclopædia of Islám*).

Kitābu’l-Iqtisād fi’l-‘Itiqād. (Moderation in Belief). Al-Adabíyya Press, Cairo, no date.

On Kalām (Theology properly so called).

Kitābu’l-Maḍnūn bihi ‘alá ghauri ahlihi (The Book of what is kept back from those who are not worthy of it). Al-Azharíyya al-Misríyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

Esoteric teaching of Knowing and Seeing God; on Angels, Jinn, Evil Spirits; on Miracles; on Eschatology.

Kitābu’l-Maḍnūn’s-Saghír (The Small Book of what is kept back). Al-Azharíyya al-Misríyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

Esoteric Exposition of the verse ‘Then shaped him and breathed of His Spirit into him’. This book is also known as Al-Ajwibatu’l-Ḡhazzálíyya.

Mishkátu’l-Anwár (The Niche for Lights). As-Sa‘áda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1325.

Esoteric Exposition of the verse 'God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth.' 'His Light is like a niche in which is a lamp, etc.'

Jawāhiru'l-Qur'ān (The Jewels of the Qur'ān). Kurdistān al-'Ilmīyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1329.

A collection of 'Best Verses' of the Qur'ān, with an introductory section on 'What the Qur'ān teaches'.

Al-Maqsadu'l-Asnā Sharḥ Asmā'i'llāhi'l-ḥusnā (The Loftiest Aim is the Exposition of the Beautiful Names of God). At-Taqaaddum Press, Cairo, A.H. 1322.

Exposition of the Ninety-nine Names of God, with introduction showing that to know them one must attempt to attain to the qualities they express, so far as man can do so.

Al-Ḥikmatu fī Maḥlūqāti'llāhi [Wisdom (shown) in God's Creations]. As-Sa'āda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1326.

On the Wisdom of God as shown in His works.

Ad-Durratu'l-Fākhira (The Precious Pearl). Khayrīyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1322.

On Eschatology.

Risālatu'l-Ladunīyya [A Letter on (Knowledge) which comes from Him]. Kurdistān al-'Ilmīyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

On Knowledge; maintaining the reality and superiority of knowledge received direct from God by enlightenment (ilhām) or inspiration (waḥy).

Kīmīyā'us-Sa'āda (The Alchemy of Happiness). Al-Adabīyya Press, Cairo, no date.

On the nature of man; a man must know his own soul and its needs; what he was created for; wherein his true happiness consists; wherein his misery lies; in order that he may know God. Only in a true knowledge of God can he find a means of changing his evil character into a good character. The Alchemy of Happiness is to be found only in the store-house of God.

Mizānu'l-'Amal (The Balance of Works). Kurdistān Al-'Ilmiyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

On how faith must be accompanied by works: the method of the Šūfis—to attain by 'practice'—is preferable to that of those who seek to attain by obedience and 'study'.

Faysalu't-tafriqati bayna'l-Islāmi wa'z-Zandīqa (Decision in differentiating between Islam and the Atheists). As-Sa'ada Press, Cairo, A.H. 1325.

Showing what are the essentials of belief, to reject which is unbelief, and incidentally showing that much that is supposed to be essential is not so: generally advising moderation in judging and condemning others.

Al-Qustāsu'l-Mustaqīm (The Right Balance). At-Taquadum Press, Cairo, no date.

Written against the Ta'limites who held that there must be an Imām to whom one can repair for guidance: to show that Muḥammad is a sufficient Imām, and that there is no need for any other.

Kitabu Iljāmu'l-'Awāmm (The Bridling of the Commonalty). Al-Azharīyya al-Misriyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

On the Faith of the 'Fathers': that this Faith is the Truth: that belief is of six degrees, varying each from the other in strength: what God demands is the matter of belief. The book takes its name from the position maintained in it by the author—that the 'common people' should be interdicted from the study of Kalām (theology).

Bulāyatu'l-Hidāya (The Beginning of Guidance). Hamīdiyyatu'l-Misriyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1317.

Divided into two sections: 1. Obedience; practical advice on how to perform one's duties properly. 2. Avoidance of Sins; on cleansing of the heart, on keeping company with God.

Al-Munqidhu min ad-Ḍalāl (The Deliverer from Error). Al-Jamaliyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1329.

Autobiographical statement of how he was led to certainty of belief: how he was constrained to give up teaching and seek seclusion: why he afterwards resumed teaching.

Al-Imlā'u 'an ishkālātī'l-Ihyá' (The Dictated Statement on the disputed passages of the *Ihyá'*).

In margin of the 1334 edition of the *Ihyá'* and also in the margin of Sayyid Murtaḍá's Commentary on the *Ihyá'*.

A defence of certain passages in the *Ihyá'* for which he was criticized and attacked.

Minhájul-'Ábidin (The Path of the Devout). Othmaníyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1313.

An Explanation of the path in which the devout must walk and the difficulties they will encounter, and how these are to be overcome. The opening paragraphs of this book form the best possible commentary on Al-Ghazálí's experience as related in the *Munqidh*. This was his last book, and was dictated.

Al-Adab fi'd-Din (Fitting Behaviour in Religion). Kurdistán Al-'Ilmíyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

A short exposition of how a Muslim must act in the performance of various duties, in certain circumstances and relations.

The book is quite unlike Al-Ghazálí's usual style, and, if it is his, was probably written early.

Risálatu Ayyuhá'l-Walad (Letter entitled 'O Boy'). Kurdistán Al-'Ilmíyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

A short Pastoral Letter on Faith and Conduct.

Al-Qawá'idu'l-'Ashara (The Ten Rules). Kurdistán Al-'Ilmíyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

Very brief summary of general advice on religious matters. Quite unlike Al-Ghazálí's usual style. Perhaps also an early production. It is stilted, after the manner of many Arabic writers.

Risālatu'l-Ṭayr (Letter entitled 'The Birds'). Kurdistān al-'Ilmiyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1328.

A short Parable. Perhaps another early piece.

Risālatu'l-Wa'dh wa'l-I'tiqād (Letter on Preaching and Belief). As-Sa'āda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1325.

A very brief Letter on Preaching and Belief. The latter part is a summary of the essentials of Muslim Faith.

Risālatu'l-'Aq'id (Letter on the Tenets of the Faith). As-Sa'āda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1325.

A Letter to Málík Sháh on the doctrines of Islām and the Duties of Rulers and Governors.

At-Tajridu fi Kalimati't-Tawhíd (A Monograph on the Statement of the Unity). As-Sa'āda Press, Cairo, A.H. 1325.

An Exposition of the 'Kalima'; There is no God but God, and Muḥammad is the Prophet of God.

At-Tibru'l-Masbuk (Molten Gold). Al-Adāb wa'l-Mu'ayyad Press, Cairo, A.H. 1317.

A Letter addressed to Muḥammad Ibn Málík Sháh. 'An Ethical Mirror for Princes' (Macdonald in *Encyclopædia of Islām*). Said to have been written by Al-Ghazālī in Persian and afterwards translated into Arabic. The real authorship is doubtful.

Mukāshifatu'l-Qulūb (The Unveiling of Hearts). Government Press, Boulac, Cairo, A.H. 1300.

Abridgement of a work ascribed to Al-Ghazālī, but of doubtful authorship.

The subjects treated are those usually classed under Adāb (Ethics, Morals, Customs, Practices).

Al-Kashfu wa't-Tabayin fi ghurūr'i'l-Khulq Ajma'in (Disclosure and Explanation of the delusions of men in general). Printed in the margin of As-Sha'rānī's *Tanbīhu'l-Muḡhtarrin*. Al-Maymanīyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1324.

A book whose object is practical: it seeks to show how many, who consider themselves to be truly religious, fail to be so. On p. 120 Al-Ghazālī shows the self-delusions of those who think that truths and principles can take the place of a knowledge of God Himself.

Ar-Risālatu'l-Qudsiyya [Letter on the Holiness (Transcendence) of God].

This letter was incorporated by Al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā'* as the Third Section of the Second Rub' of Book I. So Al-Ghazālī himself tells us in the *Kitābu'l-Arbā'in*, p. 27.

This letter is sometimes wrongly called the Jerusalem Letter, under the impression that it was written to Muslims in Jerusalem (Al-Qūds), but undoubtedly the name refers to the subject of the book.

Kitābu Qawā'idil-'Aqā'id (Rules on the Articles of Belief).

This Al-Ghazālī himself tells us in the *Kitābu'l-Arbā'in*, p. 27 is the Second Rub' of Book I of the *Ihyā'*.

For a complete list of Al-Ghazālī's works, see Professor Macdonald's article in the *Encyclopædia of Islām*.

The following should also be consulted: Professor Macdonald's article on Al-Ghazālī in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 20, and the chapters in his *Muslim Theology*. *Gazālī* by Carra de Vaux. Paris 1902. *Al-Ghazālī's Miskāt Al-Anwār and the Ghazālī Problem*, by W. H. T. Gairdner (Special Reprint from *Der Islam*, Strassburg, July 1914: *Islām at Its Best*, by Rev. S. M. Zwemer, D.D.).

In Arabic, the following are indispensable:—

Biographical and critical article in *At-Tabaqātu'sh-Shāfi 'iyyatu'l-Kubrā*, by Abū Naṣr 'Abdu'l-Wahhāb Ibn Taqīyyi 'd-Dīn as-Subkī (died A.H. 756). Al-Ḥusayniyya Al-Misriyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1324. (The article is in vol. iv).

Biographical and critical article in the Commentary to the *Iḥyá'* by As-Sayyid Murtaḍā. Ten Volumes; Al-Maymanīyya Press, Cairo, A.H. 1311.

The article is in vol. i, and is very valuable. The author has copiously borrowed from the above-mentioned article by As-Subkí, and in some places quotations from As-Subkí are so indistinctly delimited that without the *Tabaqat* one might think that the opinions given are those of Murtaḍā when in reality they are those of the former writer.

A full list of Al-Ghazālí's works will be found here; it also contains other valuable information.

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